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Volume 1 Issue 2
A Sendai Media Group Periodical
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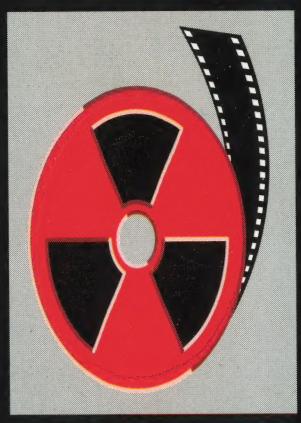

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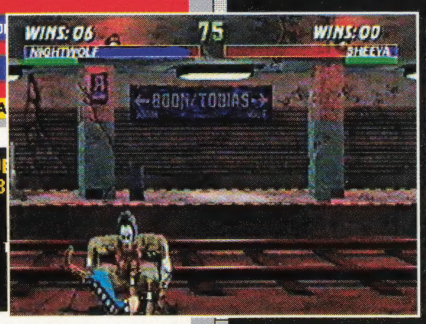

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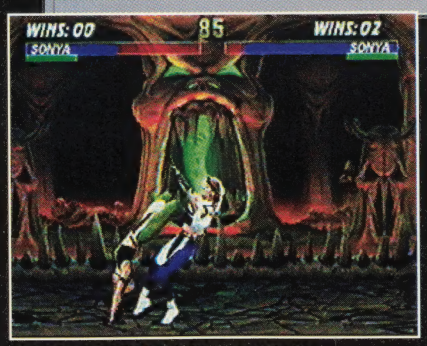

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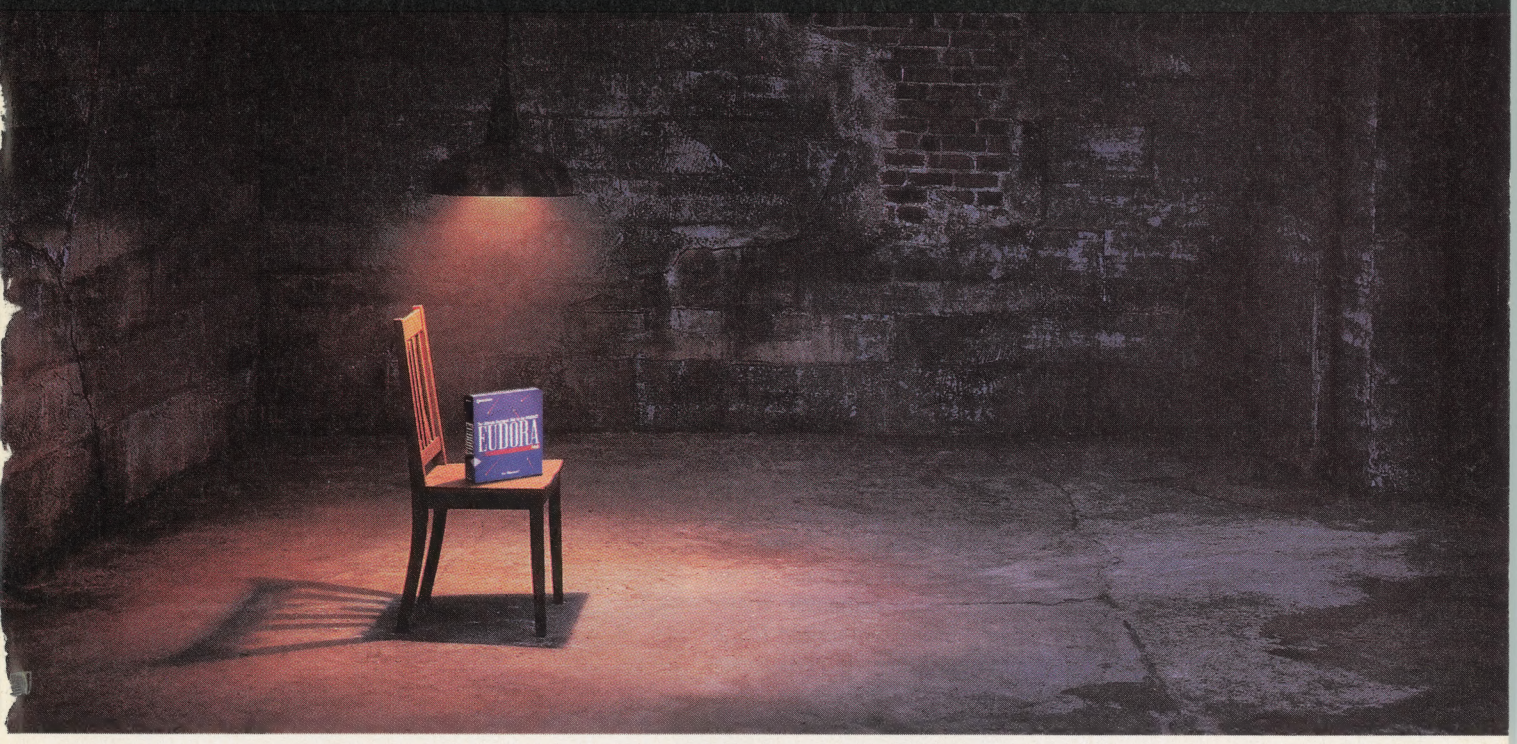

BUT SOMEHOW WE SATISFIED OVER 4 MILLION OF THEM.

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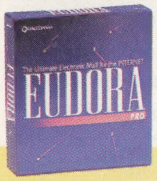

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Ah,

the new year! A time for a fresh start, a chance to throw away that which we do not feel moves our lives forward or benefits our weary psyches.

At *IU*, that means cleaning out our hotlists and making resolutions. Among the ejected, those sites that on initial inspection appeared attractive but on subsequent visits revealed essentially no real content. Graphics alone do not a Web site make, yet in 1995 we saw the rise of that beastly phenomenon known as the Web Site Based Only on Eye Appeal. Certainly, the improvements in the Netscape browsers offered the inclusion of all kinds of swell-looking stuff onto Web sites, but it made us wonder: If you can do it, does it mean you should—and refrain from anything else? Hmmm.

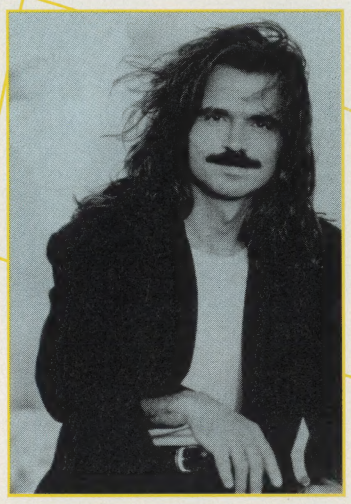
THE SEARCH FOR MEANINGFUL CONTENT: A GOAL FOR 1996.

So we decided, in a collective effort, to avoid the obviously banal, those sites crying out "Look at me!" but that do not follow up with a similar plea to "Read me!" What we ended up with were more text-oriented sites, or those that offered a deep well of information mixed in with the graphics. We call this the Avoiding Yanni Tactic (AYT), in dubious honor of the Greek-born composer known for heavily synthesized Muzak masquerading as mass-appeal pop music. Yanni feels somehow compelled to put his bewitching visage on the front, back and inside flaps of his CDs that are disappointingly filled with what can only be referred to as musical beige. When we thought about it, we concluded many Web pages suffer from the same problem: They get you excited with graphics or photos then fail to deliver, deceptively drawing you in to a void.

So in our AYTs, we decided to focus this month on CandyLand. Text-heavy, but boy can you learn stuff you'd never find in the Time-Life Home Improvement series! One of CandyMan's more controversial areas includes more than 100 files on making bombs, ranging from napalm to fertilizer-based explosives. CandyMan's site was frequently held up by major news organizations and Congress as an example of why the 'net ought to be censored. We decided to find out why he felt it was important to keep such information on the bandwidth.

Speaking of bandwidth, let's talk about sound. For so long, our ears have simply been the "teased" sense, the one that had to get by with just a few seconds of .WAV files offering simple snippets of sound. Now, developments such as RealAudio, IWave and other sound applications transmit words and music in a big way, allowing for bands and radio stations to set up shop and hawk their wares through the ether. Two of our stories in this issue profile these developments and the impact of such technology, from the bands who make music to the people who listen to it.

Also in 1995, we saw the advent of Maybe Too Many of a Good Thing Web sites. By that, we mean the situation in which multiple sites are erected by well-meaning fans offering essentially the same details on identical subjects. A prime example: *The X-Files*. Now, none of us would miss an episode of the Fox show, but hey, there's got to be a limit. It's sort of the same way so many Internet magazines hit the newsstands in 1995, but that's another story. We've resolved not to create an *X-Files* page of our own.



Yanni: Style Over Substance

A little something about our cover story. This month, contributing editor Simson Garfinkel takes a look at something we've been wondering about here in the *IU* offices. Namely, will the Internet hurt the online services? This may be a story that eludes other media, as some people (journalists included) seem to misunderstand that when hooked on America Online, a user is limited only to a cul-de-sac on the Internet, not offered access to an on-ramp. Garfinkel, author of several books on the 'net and a frequent contributor to *Wired* magazine and *The Boston Globe*, investigates.

Oh and our other resolutions? Lose weight, get in shape, write more letters, volunteer for charities and spend more time with our children (although none of us have any). Well, that's what we would do if we could bring ourselves to log off long enough. Maybe we'll just concentrate on Avoiding Yanni.

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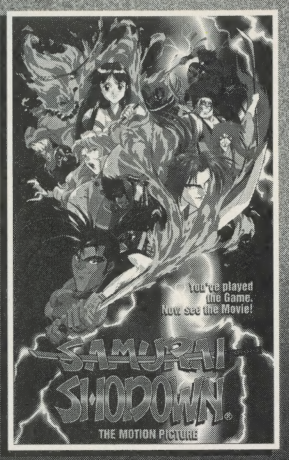

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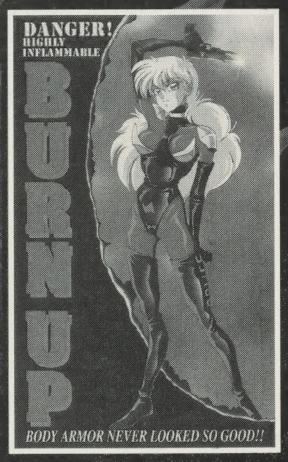

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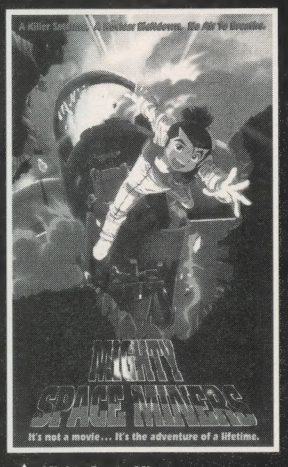

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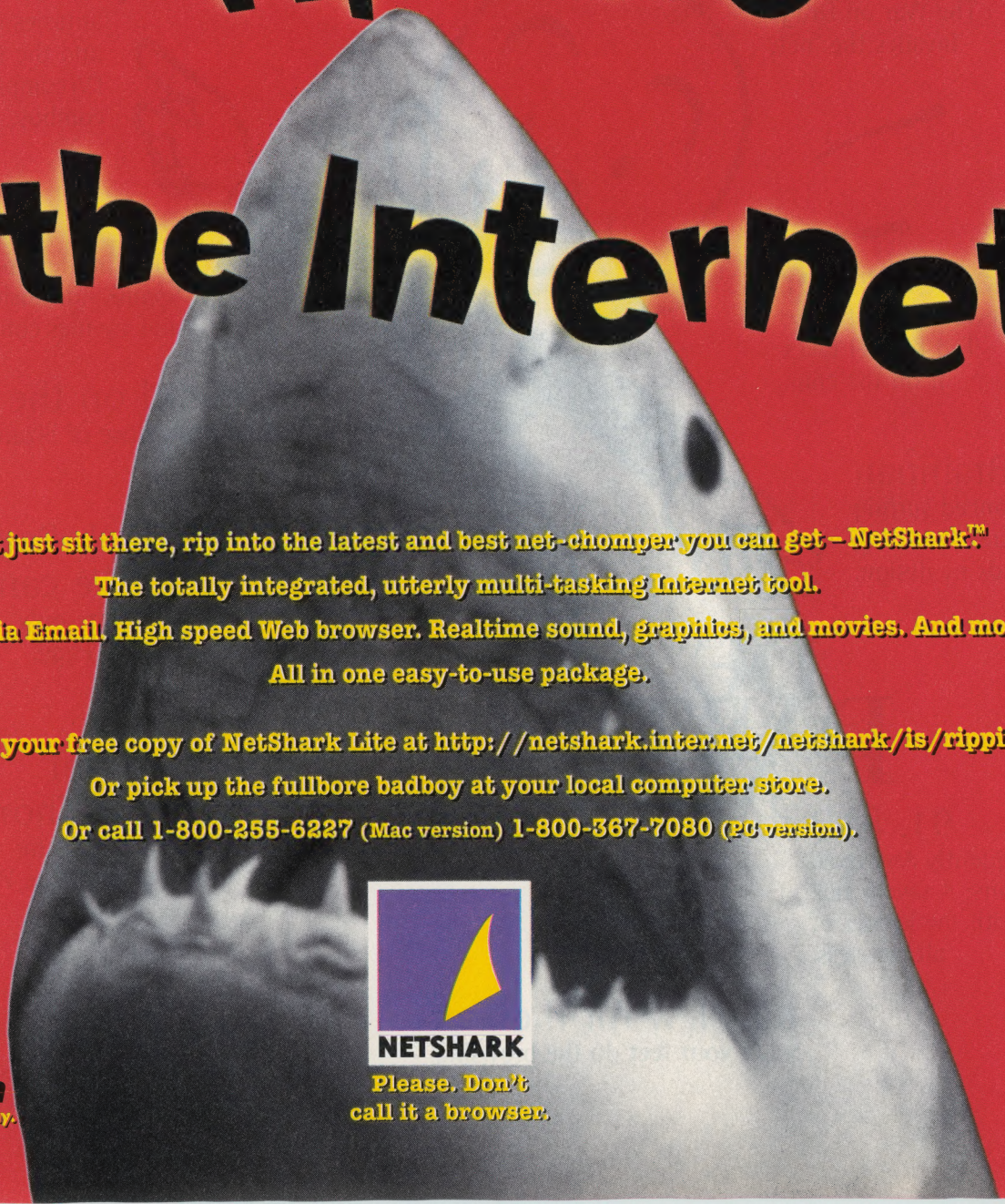

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VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2 JANUARY 1996

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Inside the Underground

(LETTERS)

Wow!

That's all I can say about your first issue! You have by far the best 'net magazine around! Your Weird on the Web section rocks! But why do you have a column called Sysop that featured someone who put an FAQ up on a Web site? I don't think that qualifies him as a Sysop, even if that column was really funny. Despite that pesky item, I love your mag and I'm busy telling everyone why we all ought to pave the earth.

knfrend@aol.com
Bradenton, Fla.

KNFREND: YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT SYSOP. WE REALIZED IT WAS A MISNOMER. BEING THE MASTERS OF OUR OWN UNIVERSE, WE OFFICIALLY CHANGED THE NAME TO FAQs (FOR FREQUENTLY ANSWERED QUESTIONS) AS WE CONDUCT THOSE INTERVIEWS VIA A MORE-OR-LESS STANDARD QUESTIONNAIRE SENT OUT BY E-MAIL IN A FORMAT BLATANTLY PILFERED FROM *PARADE*.

What's in a name?

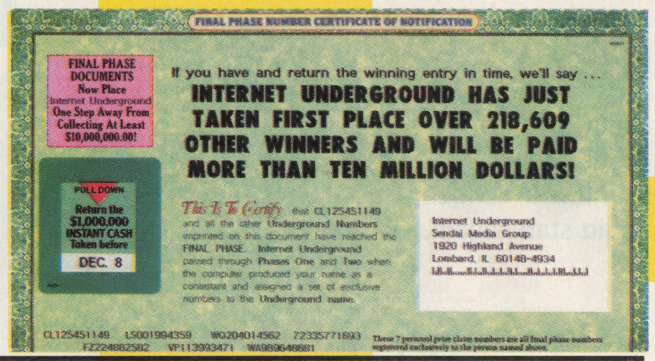
Twinkie Tattle

Bravo to *Internet Underground* for your story on the two intrepid researchers who had the foresight to experiment on Twinkies. I used to opt for Zingers while visiting Malinowski's, but after reading about the physical properties of a Twinkie I am a convert to the Hostess side. I hope your magazine will continue to run long stories about college kids with lots of time on their hands who are obsessive about different varieties of junkfood. Keep up the good work!

A.K. Agikamik
ugandmug@netcom.com
Lake Nebagamon, Wisc.

A.K. YOU'RE IN LUCK. CHECK OUT OUR FEATURE ON THE MENTOS FAQ ON PAGE 72.

Letter of the month:



"And, the upshot of net Underground pell mell into a fabulous Lombard, and bring you places and never imagined before!" – Dick and Ed

MAN, I UNDERSTAND WHERE YOU'RE COMING FROM WITH THE 'NET SECURITY STUFF, SINCE LAST MAY I GOT RIPPED OFF BY A GUY WHO FOUND THE BLACK CARBON THING FROM MY CREDIT CARD IN THE GARBAGE AT SEARS, THEN MADE ANOTHER COPY, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT, I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT HE DID SINCE I DIDN'T SEE IT BUT WHO CARES! IT SUCKED. I GOT RIPPED OFF, HE CHARGED A VACUUM CLEANER, A HOOVER WITH AUTOMATIC DRIVE CONTROL, TO MY ACCOUNT, EXCEPT NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, IT WASN'T A CREDIT CARD, IT WAS MY SEARS CARD, AND THEY DIDN'T MAKE ME PAY FOR IT, SO I GUESS IT WASN'T THAT BIG A DEAL. BUT STILL, WATCH OUT! I GUESS THIS DOESN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE INTERNET, BUT IT WAS KIND OF THE SAME THING. NEVER LIVE IN FEAR. DO YOU GUYS HAVE T-SHIRTS?

CABE2@aol.com

Somewhere, a point

CABE2: FEAR NOT, WE WILL ULTIMATELY HAVE SOME SORT OF T-SHIRT AVAILABLE VIA OUR WEB SITE AT HTTP://WWW.NUKE.COM/UNDERGROUND.HTML. HOWEVER, WE DON'T KNOW WHEN WE'LL HAVE THEM, WHAT THEY WILL LOOK LIKE OR ANY CLUE HOW MUCH THEY MIGHT COST. GLAD WE COULD HELP!

l-r: justin, sarah, alex, jane, tom and kat (under table, begging for scraps)

Your first issue was great. In particular, I was taken by the story on the arbiters of cool; I always wondered who did those sites. I wasn't even sure if they were real people. Quick, stupid question: Was that photo of the surgeons really of the staff? Just curious.

Is it You?

K.S. Brown
ksbrown@gate.net

K.S.: No, that photo was lifted from an aged yearbook passed onto us by a mystic presence in the *IU* art department. We were unable to determine if they were actually performing an alien "autopsy." (See page 78, Issue 1.) Above, you'll find an up-to-date photo of the whole staff.

MAIL AND IU

Hey You!

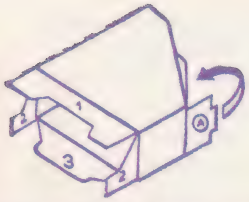
Direct your ire or kudos to the **Mail Guy** via e-mail to IU@mcs.net, by fax to (708) 916-7225 or over land to 1920 Highland Ave., Ste. 222 Lombard, IL 60148

it all would hurl Inter

life of luxury to astound everyone in show you things you've

I disagree with you about the cinematic quality of *The Net*. Sandra Bullock is one of the hottest young rising stars in Hollywood and it's because of the realism that she lends to every film. Just because Mr. Garrick Schmitt could never meet anyone as beautiful and talented as Sandra Bullock means that he has to cut down her cinematic achievements? Go Sandra! I can't wait for *Speed II*!

ACdavenport@amherst.edu



1. SQUARE UP FILE AND FOLD BOTTOM FLAPS IN NUMERICAL SEQUENCE AS SHOWN.

Never mind the Bullock bashing

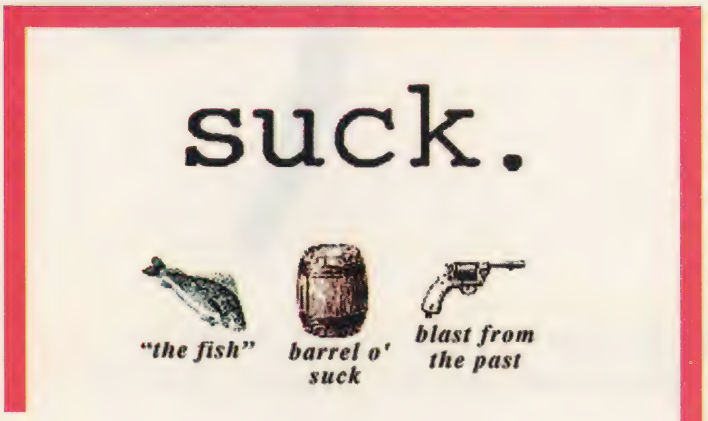
ACdavenport: We think this is a classic case of confusing the admittedly appealing exterior of an actress with the admittedly questionable interior of a film. But you're right; Mr. Schmitt admits he's never met anyone quite as beautiful and talented as Ms. Bullock.

net top ten

Index Librorum Liberorum

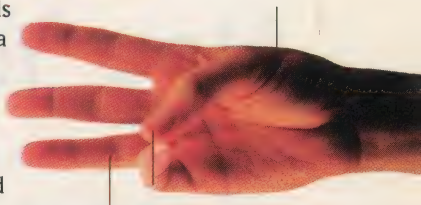
http://www.fourmilab.ch/index.html

John Walker's site of various science toys, though seemingly simple at first, quickly explodes the myth of the Web as a passive learning tool. One of the few sites in which it's possible to lose countless hours, Walker's simulations take better advantage of their medium than any other science site we've seen. Cship, our personal favorite, explains the theory of relativity by taking you on a ship traveling close to the speed of light and then using MPEGs and JPEGs to show how the rest of the surrounding environment shifts. Cship is only one of several such experiments, however—there's much more to this site than we could possibly give justice to in a short description. Of course, when you create a new planet daily (check out the Terranova page), putting up a complex Web site must not seem too hard.



AFU FAQ

http://www.dsg.cs.tcd.ie:/dsg_people/afcondon/AFU/ULs.html

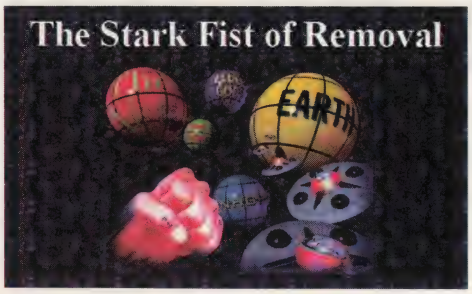


Are Tasmanian devils extinct? Is there such a thing as a kosher Chinese restaurant? Is there a place to get hard liquor in Disneyland? Are gerbils illegal in California? To find out, you'll have to read the lengthy Frequently Asked Questions of alt.folklore.urban, a document filled with the astonishing truth about commonly repeated rumors and "facts." Each entry is flagged as true, possibly true, blatantly false or probably not true, but scientifically possible. However, even the knowledgeable FAQ can't be certain if Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone.

suck

http://www.suck.com/

The editors of *suck* strive to debunk the corporate media frenzy attacking the Web, fighting "literary laziness" by providing thought-provoking content on a daily basis. Cleanly designed and well written, *suck* editors sprinkle hyperlinks throughout their text to move their stories forward. Their topics range from the absurd number of tepid "cool" sites to pointing readers to a book probing what would happen if Nietzsche worked at a convenience store. Arguably one of the most worthwhile reads on the Web, this site will help you learn what's going on behind the hype and the links of the 'net. *(For the scoop on* suck *turn to page 62.)*



Church of the SubGenius

http://sunsite.unc.edu/subgenius/

In this holy site on the Web, learn the sacred laws, myths and comic teachings on the importance of slack from the Rev. "Bob" Dobbs. Every visit to the Church requires a check into the rants of members in the Hall of Answers, where you read about everything from Microwave Harassment and Mind-Control Experimentation (Part II only) and a studious look at slack and dogs. It's worth the navigation to search for The Endless FAQ. (Pity the poor soul who expects a detailed, anal-retentive archive source on a group called alt.slack.) The SubGenius altar recently added radio capabilities to the site, so you can hear Bob's preachings yourself. All slackers give praise to Bob!

WWWF Grudge Match

http://www.cheme.cornell.edu:80/~slevine/lastweek.html

Ever wondered if the Munsters could beat the Addams Family on *Family Feud*? Or if Gary Coleman could take Webster in an old-fashioned street brawl? How about whether Mr. Clean could hold his own is a bar brawl with Mr. T? Two Cornell college students have, and they took their musings to the Web in the form of weekly grudge matches. After reading the setting and commentary from the site's authors you get to cast your vote on the outcome. And despite popular opinion we think Herman and company would whip Gomez et. al.

TV Bytes: The WWW TV Themes Home Page

http://www.tvtrecords.com/tvbytes/tvthemes.html

Not much glitz, just an exhaustive resource of TV theme songs there for the downloading. This collection is amazing, ranging from old stand-bys (*The Brady Bunch, Gilligan's Island*) to forgotten classics (*Six Million Dollar Man, Top Cat*) to themes no one could possibly hum (*Punky Brewster, Vega$*). Special bonus: There's a whole Schoolhouse Rock section. The sound quality isn't perfect, but this is Hong Kong Phooey, not Vivaldi, so who cares?

NBA Online

http://www.nba.com/

The official site of the NBA is a must-stop for any hoops fan. Visit individual pages for every team and nearly every player from Michael Jordan to Zan Tabak. Plus stats, standings, league leaders, transactions, news, notes, all-star balloting, QuickTime movies, RealAudio interviews—no stone is left unturned at this very classy, polished site. Not convinced? There's even directions to the Delta Center in downtown Salt Lake City.

No Shitting in the Toilet

http://www.magna.com.au/~travdude/

Aussie Peter Moore named his irreverent travel site after a real sign he encountered on a trek to China. The sign made no sense, but that's just the point; much of traveling comes with the unexpected, and that's just fine by Moore. In his site, he offers loads of advice written in a wonderful humorous voice. Top choices here are the sections detailing romance on the road and the Top 10 bum steers that well-known travel guide books offer tourists. We'd travel with Moore anywhere.

The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World

http://ce.ecn.purdue.edu:80/~ashmawy/7WW/modern.html

This site, created by Purdue graduate student Alaa Ashwamy, manages to take one of those topics everyone knows exists (though few know little more than that) and make it both entertaining and enlightening. Chockfull of hyperlinks and facts that are only sort of useless (for example, the word mausoleum comes from the Tomb of Maussollos at Halicarnassus), the Seven Wonders page even posts a few replacements for the absent six monuments, offering up comparatively modern creations like Angkor Wat, the Eiffel Tower and the Colosseum. No word yet as to whether South Dakota's Corn Palace is under consideration.

Autosite

http://www.autosite.com

Whether you're choosing, purchasing, maintaining, accessorizing, repairing or selling a car, you owe it to yourself to check out Autosite, an exhaustive resource of "timely facts, interactive tools, and expert resources you need to make informed automotive decisions." One of the best features is Autosearch, where you enter your criteria and the site presents you with a list of autos that fit your needs. Then you can hyperlink to each car to see pictures, review options or read articles about that vehicle. Happy motoring!

culture.watch

alt.

Good Lord No!

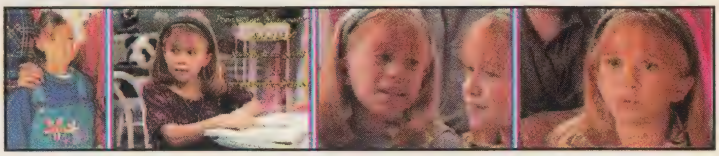
Huey Lewis and The News
http://www.nmt.edu/
~nguyenm/huey.html

The Macaulay Culkin Home Page
http://www.cris.com/~axel/culkin/index.shtml

PolkaNet
http://www.cyberenet.
net/~szymczak/

Bob Saget Home Page
http://www.gigaplex.com/
wow /books/bob/bsaget.htm

Mary-Kate & Ashley Fuller Olsen Home Page
http://www.gbar.dtu.dk/ ~gc948157/Olsen/index.html



BARGAIN BIN

Taxidermy Vampire Mice
http://www.primenet.com/
~vomitus/necromance/bugs/

Mickey's hickeys never packed this much bite. In case nothing died in your stocking this Christmas or for that special New Year's Eve attention-getting barrette, the Vomitus Maximum Museum has been kind enough to offer a selection of stuffed vampire mice for sale. Selling for a mere $37 dollars for a set of three, these taxidermic experiments will terrify anyone with a modicum of good taste. (We hear mummy chipmunks are going for at least $50.) Be sure to skim around the rest of the site—if you've been having trouble finding that special gift for your cousin Bob's birthday, remember that everyone likes dead things in formaldehyde. If they don't, they like skulls.

Numbers on the 'Net

A comparative look at random important societal representative phrases through Lycos searches

Brady Bunch - 105	Partridge Family - 147
Munsters - 3	Addams Family - 149
Cher - 4,683	Madonna - 1,782
Coke - 119	Pepsi - 27
Barbie - 41	Pamela Lee - 56

Netspeak

"If I had any, they would be exposed to many different options that they would be able to choose from. But. I'm sure they would choose *Satanism*. Most children would."

-INDUSTRIAL ANGST ROCK MUSICIAN MARILYN MANSON, WHEN ASKED WHAT RELIGION HIS CHILDREN WOULD BE, ON AOL

"Liberal thought and analysis is atmospheric, and doesn't need to be searched out. It creeps in with the air. It can only be avoided when it is in *The New York Times* editorial page, which can be skipped."

-WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY, JR., ON AOL

"I'm real sick and tired of my friends getting through online. Call me on the damn phone."

-PRINCE BE OF PM DAWN WHEN HIS FRIENDS JOINED HIS CHAT SESSION ON AOL

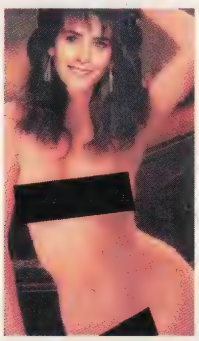
The Skinny on the Naked

Celebrity nudes, fact or fiction?

COLLECTING CELEBRITY NUDES used to take a whole lot more effort. Aspiring tabloid photographers crawled under fences, climbed over gates or sneaked through doorways to get one grainy shot of some erstwhile TV star sunbathing topless. Now, however, the naked-celebrity enthusiast has an unparalleled tool for fulfilling fantasies: It's called Photoshop.

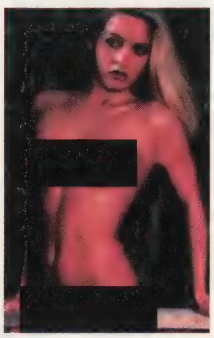
UNFORTUNATELY, skill and technology don't always mesh. One advantage of the Internet is its ability to collect all of the infatuations of one group into one place, where normality, randomness and ineptitude merge, often with comical results. Alt.binaries.nude.celebrities, for example, focuses its fetish perfectly—from a staggeringly idiotic shot of Tori Spelling falling out of her dress to Bill Clinton's head atop a perfectly sculpted frame, *IU* decided to check out the best and worst celebrity nude pictures and requests. One warning: Stay away from Elvira.

The Pictures... Least Believable Fakes That Show Up a Lot



Courteney Cox

Sandra Bullock



Alicia Silverstone

Sometimes Fake, Sometimes Not

Demi Moore

Alyssa Milano

Phoebe Cates

Usually Not

Madonna

Elizabeth Berkley

Pamela Lee

...and the Requests

Come On Feel the '80s
Catherine Bach (Daisy Duke)
Loni Anderson
Lauren Tewes (Julie McCoy from *Love Boat*)

A Geek's Wish List
Gillian Anderson
Any nude *Star Trek* photos
Teri Hatcher

A Little Explanation, Please
The Pink Power Ranger
Charo
David Letterman

Http://TV.magazine.com
Selected references to the 'net in those

OTHER MEDIUMS

With the *X-Files* such a big hit on the Web (see page 64), it's encouraging that a recent episode dealing with the 'net contained no major 'net usage flaws. The episode focused on a cyber seducer who would strike up relationships with overweight lonelyhearts in chat rooms on an unspecified online service. At several points in the episode, Mulder even got a chance to flash his 'net know-how. The episode served as a good reminder that people in chat rooms who come across as too good to be true probably are just that. Or in this case, they are probably weird vampirish men who secrete an acid on their dates so they can digest their date's fatty deposits to feed their hunger. Of all the 'net references in the episode, the classic line came from Scully, in response to Mulder's observation that the killer's MO was similar to a scorpion's. Said an observant Scully: "I don't know too many scorpions who surf the Internet."

INTERNET INTIMACIES

The old credo used to be that sex sells. But anyone scanning magazine racks in the last few months will tell you that the Internet sells even better. If you can combine the two, you've got publishing gold, or so the theory goes.

The December issue of *Penthouse*, therefore, featured this nice, big deck: "Internet Intimacies: Sexually Charged Women Reveal Their Most Private Secrets Online." As Internet aficionados, this piqued our interest—what mysterious corners of the 'net had Bob Guccione explored? A torrid tale of a C++ programmer seduced on a camping trip? A lab supervisor picking up a college coed for a tryst on the UNIX machine? Unfortunately, the reality was much less sordid. All "Internet Intimacies" did was ask women from newsgroups and chat rooms their opinions on such much-covered ground as whether size really matters. Aside from the medium from which the writer chose his female subjects, "Internet Intimacies" read much like any other sex questionnaire. Except for one thing—all the women surveyed were roughly 5'7", 22-years-old with measurements in the 36B-26-36 range.The 'net does, after all, allow for the preservation of some fantasies.

NET LINE

INTELLIGENCE REPORT: NEWS FROM THE UNDERGROUND

Percentage of Senators who voted for cyberspace regulation last spring:

84%

Percent of Representatives who voted against cyberspace regulation two weeks later:

98.8%

Estimated percentage of people in Europe with personal computers:

13%

Gaming to Get into the 'net Business

Sega's leading the pack to hook up the Japanese home market

In the mad rush to gain from the rapid proliferation of the Internet, it seems like every genre of hardware manufacturer is attempting to provide some kind of 'net connection. The most recent entrants into the race (and the ones getting the most press attention) are video-game makers. Using relatively simple hardware, multiple-usage capabilities and significant name recognition, game makers hope to capture a niche in the ever-growing online market.

The path toward Internet saturation is being beaten most vigorously by Sega. The Japan-based gaming dynasty has barraged the press in recent months with a slew of releases touting various forms of commitment to the online gaming industry. Online gaming, Sega recognizes, stands to change the field more profoundly than the invention of the joystick. Being able to fight a real opponent halfway across the planet provides much more of an adrenaline kick than taking on a computer.

Much of the attention given to Sega's online endeavors, however—and especially the reaction to the announcement of Saturn Internet—misses the major reasoning behind the launch.

Saturn Internet, planned for a March '96 release in Japan, will allow consumers to access the 'net through the Saturn, Sega's recently released 32-Bit gaming system. But don't look for the Saturn Internet to have much of an impact in the U.S; the release of the system has more to do with the realities of Japan's home Internet market than Sega's instant need to throw a chip into the American hardware pot. "The home PC market hasn't taken off in Japan the way it has in the U.S.," explains Dan Stevens, a spokesman for Sega. Without the kind of home PC market saturation enjoyed in the U.S., Japanese consumers are seeking alternate ways to explore the Internet. Sega can therefore supplement systems already being bought in considerable numbers (1 million units by May 1995) with yet one more reason to buy from Sega.

This is unlikely to happen in the U.S., however, for the basic reason that the American PC market is already so strong. Saturn Internet may never prove to be appropriate for American consumers already hooked up through their home PCs and computers at work. "We fully expect that PCs will remain the main form of connection to the Internet in the U.S.," says Stevens. Because of this, Sega's online efforts have been directed mainly at supplemental content rather than hardware.

The public-relations angle taken on Sega's recent formation of Sega Soft reiterates this theme. A new company combining Sega's talents with CSK Corp., the largest independent software maker in Japan, Sega Soft will develop software not only for platforms like the Saturn but also for PCs and the Internet. Players all over the world will be able to access games over the Internet, with downloading and multiplayer gaming a major focus of the company.

Sega isn't the only game company concentrating on Internet hardware. Philips, makers of the CD-i system, hopes to bring the Internet to consumers' televisions through a CD-I player, a 14.4 modem and a subscription to their new service, CD-Online. The system was released in the U.K. this holiday season, with a test run to determine its potential for U.S. markets. Like Sega, however, CD-I faces an uphill battle. Without the kind of consumer base enjoyed by commercial online services or even a larger game system like Sega or Nintendo, Philips will have to convince U.S. consumers to forsake their PCs for an Internet connection via their machine or to buy CD-I as a supplemental system. If they can provide online gaming quickly, they may stand a chance, but competitors like PSINet and The ImagiNation Network are crowding the field quickly.

If computer history has taught us anything, it's that software companies have an innate edge over hardware makers just by virtue of their negligible overhead. With companies clamoring to create online gaming for PCs, alternate Internet systems will have a difficult time competing.

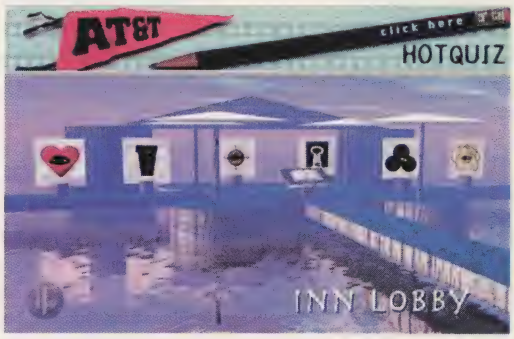
-Justin Ware

Online Fantasies Take You Offline

Get off your duff and hit the tundra

One common image of the Internet suggests a worldwide celebration of inertia, a collection of bleary-eyed souls stuffing themselves with Cheetos and slugging six-packs of Jolt to keep themselves awake late at night. 'Net surfers aren't considered the most vibrant folk, nor is Web social life considered on a par with, say, Paris. Interactive media doesn't necessarily mean active.

Susan Forkin, founder of the Interactive Fantasy Network, is trying to chance this perception. "We love our computers too, but we want to get people up and out into the real world," explains Forkin. Her Web-based network, IFNet, emphasizes custom fantasies and programming as her major tool to draw users; all of IFNet's areas have been formed as a response to suggestions from visitors. Separated into six distinct sections—adventure, spirit, mind, body, action and romance—IFNet's channels offer their own seminars and programs, chat rooms and posting boards where customers offer up fantasies ranging from the extraordinary (ride a killer whale) to the tepid (get hooked up to the Internet at work). Each channel attempts to create a community above and beyond the casual visit. The Global Action Channel, for example, has shows focusing on various kinds of activism, yet its programming also extends to luminary-filled galas taking place online.



IFNet has discovered a distinct niche. With much of the Web's content unabashedly male, Forkin wanted to develop a site appealing to women, and it's worked: More than half of IFNet's visitors are female. Forkin attributes their unusual rate of recidivism to a strong cross-section of well-educated and intelligent women as well as men. IFNet's chat rooms function like chat rooms anywhere else, except that the GIF trading and asinine pick-up lines are remarkably absent.

"The level of discourse has been intellectually provocative, challenging, thoughtful and for the most part, not insipid," says Forkin. "I'm thrilled to find that, as a woman who built this network with the hope to build a fun, engaging place for women, they have come."

This may also be because of the wares Forkin is peddling. Unlike many sites, Forkin's major aim is to transform customer's realities by using the Internet as a tool to discover fantasies, then kicking users away from their

screens and off to Bali or the Amazon. IFNet gives users a chance to post their own fantasies and find similar soul mates or to sign up for a trip organized by IFNet, with significant prodding from a slate of characters encouraging users to break from their routines.

Whether or not this will work remains to be seen, but IFNet has gained attention from a number of major studios who recognize that online programming has a robust future. Since IFNet can respond directly to its customers, it can shift its content to reflect the needs, hopes and desires of its users. A TV nature show might show you the beauty of Nairobi National Park, but it can't hook you up with guides, traveling buddies and a decent airfare. "We're creating a whole new paradigm," says Forkin. "This network is constructed in such a way that it's organic in nature...you can step through the looking glass and become part of the storyline." - JW

Estimated percentage of people in the U.S. with personal computers:

34%

Market Value of the 5.1% share in AOL bought by Apple:

$161,500,000

Price paid by Apple

$12,500,000

Statistics courtesy of Congress, AOL, and INTECO

—Forget Disney World, let's hit Antarctica this year

Antarctica isn't exactly the most popular of travel destinations. Despite its awe-inspiring beauty and paramount importance to science, education and even weather patterns, the place is too damn cold and too distant for a weekend jaunt. Most people interested in the frozen continent so far had to settle for reading *Scott of the Antarctic*. Or, if they had a large enough science museum in town, they could check out the I-max film.

Not any more. TerraQuest has developed a Web site to showcase the world's least hospitable realm from the comfort of your own swivel chair. TerraQuest's Virtual Antarctica (http://terraquest.com) incorporates a series of live links to bring viewers along on an actual expedition South, with live chats and video feeds used with surprising regularity. A cooperative venture between adventure travel specialists Mountain Travel-Sobek and corporate travel company WorldTravel Partners, TerraQuest intends to explore a number of destinations over the next several years, using all of the Web's tools to make vicarious travel more interactive than ever.

"We're not trying to take away the remoteness of the locale," explains Gary Schumacher, president of WorldTravel Partners Interactive. "We're trying to give people access to places they may not be able to go. In a more metaphorical way, TerraQuest will be their guide to the location."

Schumacher sees the Web as the future of interactive travel; as technology gets faster and faster, he expects live video feeds to become commonplace. "The Web can never take the place of real travel," explains the self-professed Antarctica enthusiast, "but it can sure fill in some of the gaps."

Mixed Media

About 10 years ago, *U.S. News and World Report* unearthed two news items that drastically affected guidance counselors everywhere: 1) Americans love easy-to-read charts and 2) Parents will buy almost anything to get their kids into college.

Thus was born the America's Best Colleges and Universities issue, which became a runaway bestseller, spawned countless copycats and became as reliable a cash cow as SAT preparation courses. Since students are often on the cutting edge of technology, *U.S. News* (once the stodgiest of news mags) has gone multimedia with the U.S. News: Getting into College CD-ROM and the U.S. News College Fair Web site (http://www.agtnet. com/usnews/fair/home.htm). The College Fair hyperlinks to individual schools and to businesses that are supposedly hiring. Though the Web site is less interactive than the CD-ROM, which uses inputted information to find a college where you might get admitted, the College Fair does a pretty decent job of getting the whole process going. Now if they could just upload GRE answers.

After putting up sites for several of their other magazines including *Elle*, *Car and Driver* and *George*, Hachette Filipacchi Magazines recently debuted the online version of *Premiere* at http://www.premieremag.com/. While this means adding yet another movie-related site to the Web, the content tends to be a little more upscale than others. Launching with the second "Women In Hollywood" awards luncheon, the *Premiere* site plans to showcase live chat sessions with celebrities as well as behind-the-scenes updates and articles. Hachette Filipacchi already maintains a substantial bank of magazines on AOL, though there's no word yet as to when *Car and Driver Buyers' Guide to Pickups, Vans and Sport Utilities* will hit the Web.

The House of Blues Online, already an impressive site, has launched an area on America Online, and at press time was in negotiations to spread the blues wealth to CompuServe, Prodigy and MSN.

The AOL version has a lot of content to build from, however. The House of Blues Web site (http://hob.com) is not only chock-full of memorabilia and information, it also boasts some of the best use of Web technology for live concerts and tours.

From One Screen to Another

Beyond the TV/Computer Combo Hype

In the days before *Myst* could make your entire weekend vanish in a bleary-eyed fog, and logging into an empty mail box would give you a fit of melancholy, there was this device known as a television. Before computers, TV was the greatest invention of the century, a device that would revolutionize communication (which it did) and reinvent education (which it didn't). Years later, TV has certainly changed the cultural landscape, but in a manner akin to how the Exxon Valdez changed the Alaskan coastline.

In the 1980s the next great invention of the century was the personal computer, and we were once again reassured that this device would revolutionize communication (it did) and reinvent education (it might).

What computers have done, without question, is give TV a run for its money by eroding its customer base—i.e., pulling viewers away from the big tube with all of its glitzy commercials toward the small window into cyberspace, where commercials are scant to non-existent.

The broadcast industry is finding itself in a quandary. There is a growing group of people who would rather interact with the millions of denizens on the 'net than be passively entertained by television. Even those who continue to watch TV split their time between their televisions and their computers, reducing the time they're exposed to those all-important commercials. Worse yet, the people defecting to the online world are from that most desirable demographic group: young, white professionals with scads of disposable income.

Unable to counter this threat, the industry has begun adopting the strategy of "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em," and has sought out ways to blend the two similar, yet very different, mediums. The strategy thus far appears to be a two-pronged attack: put TVs into computers, or put computers into TVs.

The first plan originally came not from the broadcast industry, but from the computer industry, which developed cable-ready video capture boards. This allowed the user to hook into the home TV cable and watch TV in a little window while running other applications.

Taking advantage of this technology is the Intercast Industry Group, a consortium including media giants such as Turner Broadcasting, NBC and Viacom working with computer heavyweights like Intel, Gateway 2000, Asymetrix and Netscape.

The idea is for the computer industry to build "Intercast capable" systems (fast CPU, big hard drive and video chip), while the broadcast arm provides content. Newscasts, sports scores, sports statistics, concert schedules and other information will be piped to your computer along with the TV signal (via cable, antenna or satellite dish); this

intercast data is stored on your hard drive. When you want to pull up information on an Intercast program, you click on a hyperlink that pulls up information from the download. If you have 'net access, you can access hyperlinks on the Web directly and "interact" with the program. Intercast would allow you to obtain more detailed information about a news story you just watched Tom Brokaw report on, or to get an explanation of what the hell a "triple axle" is in Olympic ice skating. Music videos might contain links to concert schedules and ticket information, while educational programs could provide additional study material, tests or even homework assignments. Beta testing of this technology is currently underway in Portland, Ore., with national trials scheduled to start in February of 1996.

The second concept, that of putting computers in TVs, has been much ballyhooed in the mainstream media, and has been kicked around by numerous cable companies. While the idea of having a computer as easy to use as a television is appealing and a potential gold mine, it is not yet feasible. Computers are just too complicated at the moment to be simplified, and if somebody is going to go to all the trouble of hooking up a keyboard and hard drive to a TV, you might as well go buy a real computer. Also, while coaxial cable has a fair amount of bandwidth, the installed hardware is designed to deliver information in one direction, which makes it pretty useless for 'net access unless cable companies spend a few billion dollars to buy new equipment.

This drawback hasn't stopped a number of companies such as Bell Atlantic, NYNEX and Pacific Telesis from announcing plans to get involved with hybrid computer/TV projects. Whether any company will produce a product in the absence of clear market demand is the big question overshadowing any such undertaking.

It is the clear that for the next decade, at least, any traditional broadcast company that wishes to court computer users will have to learn to navigate in cyberspace.

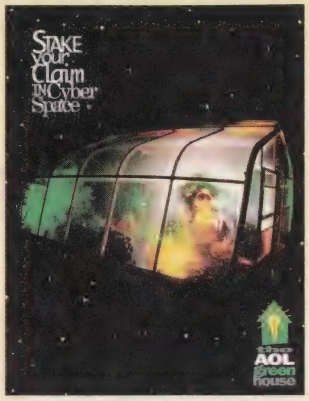
The mountains must log into Mohammed.

-David Allen

Online Service Stop

Just don't bring back *Dweebs*

Seeing the danger of relying only on connectivity for customers, America Online has lately been branching rather heavily into content, encouraging developers and creative minds to come up with interactive initiatives for the online service. The backbone of the effort revolves around AOL's Developers Studio, which encourages third-party developers to integrate their software into AOL's system, and the AOL Greenhouse, which serves as a studio for enterprising minds to create new kinds of online content. AOL is creating quite a nice synergy here—third-party developers get cash and a platform, AOL gets their products. AOL's Vice President of technical services, Lyn Camaron, explains AOL's newfound focus on outside content as a way to lure quality developers onto AOL's system and create properties that can then expand. "The best software applications aren't going to come from AOL," says Camaron. "They're going to come from experts in their fields. Software developers can go after niche markets—we're just giving them access to our service."



Vote for 10522,6317

As if daily spots on TV weren't enough, the online services have recently been going out of their way to fill more bandwidth with partisan musings and presidential candidate coverage. Prodigy's News Bulletin Board has been posting questions from subscribers since November, with Pat Buchanan, Arlen Specter, Phil Gramm, Richard Lugar, Robert Dornan, Lamar Alexander and even Steven Forbes, Alan Keyes and Morry Taylor answering queries. CompuServe, similarly, plans to launch Election Connection '96 by the first of the year, offering information, interviews and general political ramblings to subscribers. In order to get politicians at every level involved, CompuServe is offering free accounts to all state and national candidates in the 1996 elections. Too bad it's only state and national offices... we were hoping for a few good county coroner debates.

Beats the Hell out of Mu Alpha Theta

CompuServe, which as of late has blitzed just about every potential venue for its service, has launched a major effort to sign schools up to the service. By giving away an extended kid-centric software bundle for free and by instigating efforts with telecommunications companies to fire up ISDN lines for schools, CompuServe hopes to hook up fully one-fifth of the schools in the U.S. by the end of 1996. Ambitious, certainly, but CompuServe thinks that schools will be receptive.

And It's Absolutely Free! (Most of the Time Anyway)

Freenets thriving across the U.S.

Free Internet access. It sounds like an oxy-moron to those of us who scrape up our pennies for one of the many commercial services, sharing information on where the best deals are and trying to sign each other up to certain servers so we can get free hours. We envy those with educational accounts, those lucky souls with .edu after their names, who seem to have unlimited access for pennies a minute.

There is an alternative to monstrous monthly online bills, however. All across the United States, Canada and Europe, communities and individuals are setting up Internet access services dubbed freenets for one simple reason: They provide services to members for free. Read that again—FREE. And these aren't just generic ascii text files linked to an index card or two of information. These multi-user systems with the power and sophistication of a commercial online service are locally owned, locally operated and designed to meet the needs of the community that support them.

There's a real hunger, particularly in rural areas, for affordable Internet access. Freenets, by virtue of their accessibility and negligible cost, often find themselves inundated with subscribers unable to pay for or find other providers. The Alachua Freenet in Florida, for example, opened for service on Sep. 26, 1994. Since then, 28,000 individuals have subscribed (with over 15,000 using the service regularly) out of a community of roughly 100,000. Even with more than 40 computer dealers in Gainesville, modems couldn't be found anywhere within county lines two weeks after the service opened: All the dealers were sold out.

No one expected the response the public in Alachua County gave the freenet. In the opening weeks it was difficult, if not impossible, to get onto the 72 lines, as more than 10,000 people a day were accessing the service. News of freenets often spread like wildfire, rocketing through communities through word of mouth. Pat Hunt, who started a local freenet in Ukiah, Calif., found that people were logging on even before he could advertise. "People were logging on so fast that all my plans for publicity fell apart," explains Hunt.

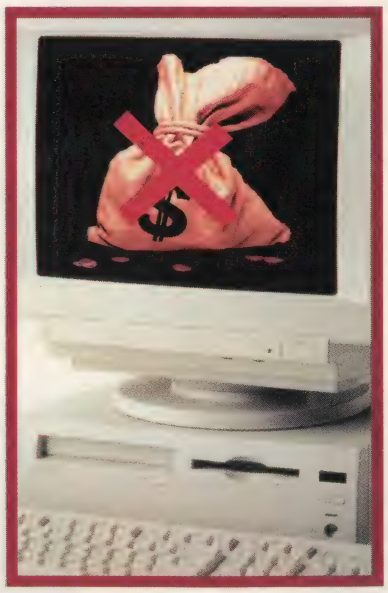
But there are problems in paradise. Many of the freenets are running into financial trouble. Running an Internet access server isn't cheap: A system with T1 access, 70 lines and one part-time paid systems administrator can cost about $66,000 a year.

It should come as no surprise, then, that many freenets are now having to charge for their services, forsaking their nicknames in favor of solvency and becoming something less than the "free" originally advertised. In some areas, the charges are as little as $1 per month, though others go for as much as $5 per month. The Omaha Freenet, for example, requires a lump-sum payment of $60 per year, along with an in-person application (though they will, in special cases, waive the fee). Some freenets offer limited feeds to the Internet to hold down costs. All rely heavily on volunteers.

> "People were LOGGING on so fast that all my plans for PUBLICITY fell apart."
>
> -Pat Hurt, Freenet founder in California

The nets that are surviving as free servers depend heavily on community involvement. In Alachua County, the freenet has been able continually to expand service thanks to grants from local businesses and institutions like the University of Florida, which donated T1 access and office space, saving the freenet more than $17,000 a year in T1 access alone. The Chebucto freenet in Canada has survived and expanded services through grants from companies such as Halifax Cable and Access Cable, with Iotek, Ltd. donating equipment.

Dave Pokorney, a coordinator for computer applications at the University of Florida in Gainesville, is one of the founding members of the Alachua Freenet. "We built the freenet intentionally for access at the lowest common denominator. You can get on Alachua Freenet with a 300 baud modem. The folks who need it [a freenet] the most are on the bottom of the pyramid," says Pokorney. "We built it to be a community service. We developed programs for putting computers in the local schools and the county libraries to provide Internet access to everyone, including the homeless."



The bottom line appears to be that the systems building strong community involvement are most likely to survive with truly free access intact. By limiting services to what they can comfortably support and by building local involvement, the freenets are able to give something back to the community. In Dillon, Mont., for example, Ken Bandelier found support through an online support group on the Big Sky Telegraph, a local freenet, when he was diagnosed with cancer.

Freenets seem to be finding their niche through a level of community involvement absent from nationwide commercial services or even from local ISPs. Systems can concentrate their limited resources not on flashy links and GIF libraries, but on endeavors like Alachua County's program to teach children about the Internet. "I'm most excited for the at-risk children," says Bruce Brashear, an Alachua board member. "Imagine the world you open up for them when you put them on a terminal and let them ride the World Wide Web."

For people with low incomes or distant zip codes, this world has until recently been closed. If freenets can survive financial woes, however, these doors will remain open for all sorts of audiences. "This is not a fad that is going away," says Pokorney. "It's become part of our mainstream world."

- Sarah Bewley

And the name of the company that'll bring it to you is...

AT&T certainly doesn't set its sights small. With two major initiatives launched over the last few months and several more coming up in 1996, the long-distance carrier is jumping into the Internet fray with a fair amount of momentum. By splitting its efforts into both access and content—the "disaggregated approach," in the words of Personal Online Services President Caroline Vanderlip—AT&T hopes to capture market segments on both sides.

AT&T's online network, WorldNet, is now undergoing testing and trials for launch in 1996. Unlike other large-scale commercial providers, AT&T isn't attempting to create its own service, but is instead trying to simplify connections to make the 'net as easy to use as the telephone. Thought connectivity may seem a more fitting role for AT&T than content—they arguably have a lot more experience in wiring than design—WorldNet will be supplemented by content services accessible through the Internet. The first of these, focusing on health and fitness, will be available in mid-1996.

"It's very cumbersome to navigate the Web without packaged content," says Vanderlip, who sees organized topics as a way to focus visitors and customize information. By taking into account specific profiles and preferences, AT&T's service can keep information both timely and flexible. The first outside provider to link up with the health and fitness service, IVI Publishing in Minneapolis, will help upload information on everything from asthma to yoga.

Vanderlip was adamant about AT&T's desire to keep the service accessible through the Internet—meaning that anyone logging on through another server can participate—and relevant to each individual visitor. "Innovation and openness is the direction in which the Web is heading," explains Vanderlip, "but personalization and localization is what will keep people returning."

Net Surveys Off By 14 Million

Blame 17-year-olds and the Great White North? Not so fast...

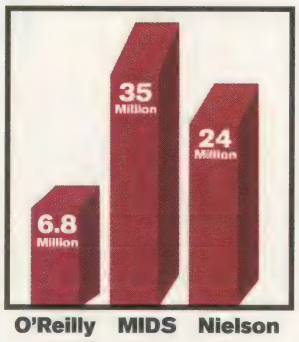
Statistical error usually takes into account the transience of consumers, shifting methodologies and the sheer randomness of any group of people who will actually talk to interviewers. Given its chaotic structure, gauging the size of the Internet was bound to be difficult. One would expect a cross-section of surveys to differ somewhat in their final tallies—but by 14 million?

That's the magic gap between numbers projected by O'Reilly and Associates, a California-based online research group, and a study released by CommerceNet and Nielsen Media Research. Nielsen pegged the Internet's use at some 24 million people, while O'Reilly estimated closer to 5.8 million with a further 3.9 million accessing via commercial online services. Numbers projected by Matrix Information and Directory Services

> "Would we have LOVED to come up with a BIGGER number? Of course."
>
> -Dick Peck, O'Reilly & Associates

deviate even further, placing the number of core Internet consumers (Web, ftp, etc.) at 13.4 million and overall users (news and e-mail) at a whopping 35 million. These numbers aren't exactly off by the standard five percent in either direction. Why the discrepancy?

Some of the differences stem simply from varying definitions of an Internet user. O'Reilly required a respondent to have their own account, rather than simply using one that really belongs to a friend, lover or neighbor, so that kept their numbers down. Nielsen also included Canada as well as the U.S. and tallied respondents 16 to 18 years old instead of just starting their survey with those over age 18.



Yet, it's pretty clear a gap of 14 million isn't made up by 17-year-olds and Canadians. Other forces are at play.

One major element of confusion comes not from the surveys' definitions of Internet users, but from Internet users' definitions of themselves. The number of people confused about whether or not they're on the 'net is higher than one might expect.

"A lot of people think they're on the Internet when they only have a local-area network," explains Dick Peck, vice president of business development at O'Reilly & Associates. "A lot of them aren't even connected to the outside world." Difficulties like this abound. Geographical stratification of calls, for example, skews stats even further, since major cities have much higher concentrations of 'net users than rural areas.

Peck suggests that one reason many surveys' numbers are so high is simply because companies want the Internet to be as large as possible. "Would we have loved to come up with a bigger number? Of course," says Peck. "Our own business interests would benefit. But we've seen so many people investing so much, with so little information... we think we came up with a number that people can safely base their investments on."

Of course, if these projections are too small, all you have to do is wait until January. Numbers by then, we've been told, might hit 50 million. And that's not even counting Canadians. -JW

>.IU insider

(Your Monthly Dose of Gossip and Conjecture)

No Rush for the Internet

Rush Limbaugh may be raking in the cash from books, radio and television deals, but evidently he's not yet willing to foot the bill for fans to express their adulation. Rush hangs out on CompuServe and as subscribers know, the service charges users a fee to receive mail from the Internet. So rumor has it that Rush has set up his account to block such e-mail traffic. If you want to fawn on him from CompuServe, though, that's OK: There's no extra charge. So despite his claims to be some sort of pioneer of the online age, "he's just too cheap to let his adoring fans send him their digital dittograms," one 'netsurfer complained to *IU*. It's a good thing his wife wasn't using AOL.

Scurvy.com is still available

With everyone getting on the Web, it seems like Procter & Gamble is assuming human afflictions will be next. After securing domain names for their spectrum of products from Charmin to Luvs, P&G took that extra-special step: The company started registering domains for body parts and physiological maladies ranging from cavities to diarrhea. No word yet on exactly what they plan to do with these sites, but it isn't all negative aspects of the human condition; Procter & Gamble has also secured beautiful.com, freshness.com, and romantic.com as well. Check out InterMania (http://www.webcom.com/-walsh/million.html) for a complete list. We can't wait for that glorious day when pimples.com finally hits screens everywhere.

Anyone for a slightly used online service?

AOL and CompuServe may be doing their best to weather the initial blows of the Internet, but not everyone is so fortunate or confident. Both Prodigy and GEnie, both of which have been financial drains on their respective owners, Sears, Roebuck and Co. and General Electric, reportedly went up on the auction block in late fall. Rumor has it that Prodigy's price is dropping like a lead weight in the Potomac; after IBM rejected an initial offering of Sears' share for $1.2 billion, Sears dropped the offer to $600 million, then to $300 million only to be continually rejected. Reuters reports that financial heavyweight Goldman-Sachs has been brought in to find a buyer. GE might want to look into Goldman-Sachs' services as well. Though officials would neither confirm or deny the rumor, sources say that GE is also attempting to get dump GEnie, which has been losing money faster than Nick Leeson. We're still waiting for word on Delphi.

Pitchfork Billy Bowen

SpamKing Dethroned?

For those of you who have somehow missed it, certified net.jerk Jeff Slaton, a.k.a. "SpamKing", has been making life miserable for Usenet groups for the last six months with his paid spamming campaigns, wasting bandwidth with advertisements of a dubious nature.

Slaton's unrepentant, "in your face" taunting and general odious personality have made him one of the most despised people on the Net. Though this has subjected him to considerable harassment in return, it has thus far had no effect.

This may change. Word has come down that the legal might of Hormel Foods, makers of Spam™, may be coming down hard on Slaton. While Slaton's use of his "SpamKing" moniker can be defended as a slang use of the word "spam," thus not infringing on Hormel's product, his inclusion of the sentence "Split open a can of Spam with the SpamKing" in a recent posting is clearly infringement on a registered trademark. Hormel was tipped off by an irate user who decided that a multi-million-dollar megacorp might be able to do what decent 'net folk haven't: muzzle the SpamKing.

Couldn't happen to a nicer guy.

GOT ANY DIRT? SEND IT ALONG TO THE IU INSIDER AT IU@MCS.COM

'net nomenclature: Little snippets of slang

In flagrante delinkto: The state of being caught with something naughty on your screen.
Trampoline: A quick screen that flashes by when the URL of a site has been changed and you get shot automatically to the new server.
SpURLing: The act of immediately hitting the back button once a site starts appearing and looks really lame.
Gutterball: The experience of getting no matches from a search engine after you've put in a futile and unlikely entry like "chipperwink," "sneezebot," or "nude+pictures+alf."
Chop Shop: A site with various Netscape goodies like backdrops and colorful buttons.

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do we really need to know?

But what about Valerie Bertinelli?

http://einstein.fallon.com/newvh/vhpage.html

Before we begin, we must confess one thing: We bought *Women and Children First* on 8-track. That was our first foray into the music of Van Halen and the last. We tossed it when we emptied our 8-track carrier when we packed up for college. Out it went, right along with all those Night Ranger tapes. So imagine our surprise when we found half a dozen sites devoted to the aging band. In one, the creator felt it necessary to settle once and for all the favorite VF tunes and albums of 'net surfers. Oddly, there are no questions comparing David Lee Roth to Sammy Hagar, as one might expect.Total votes: 1584

What is your favorite Van Halen song? Vote for one

Dreams (572)
Right Now (525)
Unchained (395)
Panama (242)
Ain't Talkin' Bout Love (204)
Best of Both Worlds (155)
5150 (146)
Jump (137)
Hot for Teacher (123)
Can't Stop Lovin' You (97)
Summer Nights (95)
Cabo Wabo (94)
When It's Love (93)
Don't Tell Me (What Love Can Do) (91)
Love Walks In (81)
Poundcake (76)
Little Guitars (74)
Ice Cream Man (66)
Not Enough (65)
Eruption (60)
Mean Streets (57)
Amsterdam (52)
Drop Dead Legs (47)
Top of the world (45)
So This is Love? (41)
Dance the Night Away (38)
Judgement Day (37)
Take Me Back (Deja Vu) (36)
The Dream Is Over (28)
Baluchitherium (26)
Simple Rhyme (25)
Beautiful Girls (24)
Black and Blue (24)
Everybody Wants Some (24)
Finish What Ya Started (23)
House of Pain (21)
Pleasuredome (19)
Runaround (19)
I'm the One (18)
Hear About it Later (17)
Aftershock (17)
Dance the Night Away (15)
Good Enough (14)
DOA (13)
Romeo Delight (13)
Put Out the Lights (1977-written by VH) (13)
Big Fat Money (12)
Women In Love (11)
Sunday Afternoon in the Park (10)
Get Up (8)

What is your favorite Van Halen album? Vote for one:

Van Halen (383)
Van Halen II (49)
Women and Children First (54)
Fair Warning (243)
Diver Down (40)
1984 (258)
5150 (601)
OU812 (130)
For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge (270)
Van Halen Live - Right Here, Right Now (114)
Balance (853)

is it worth it?

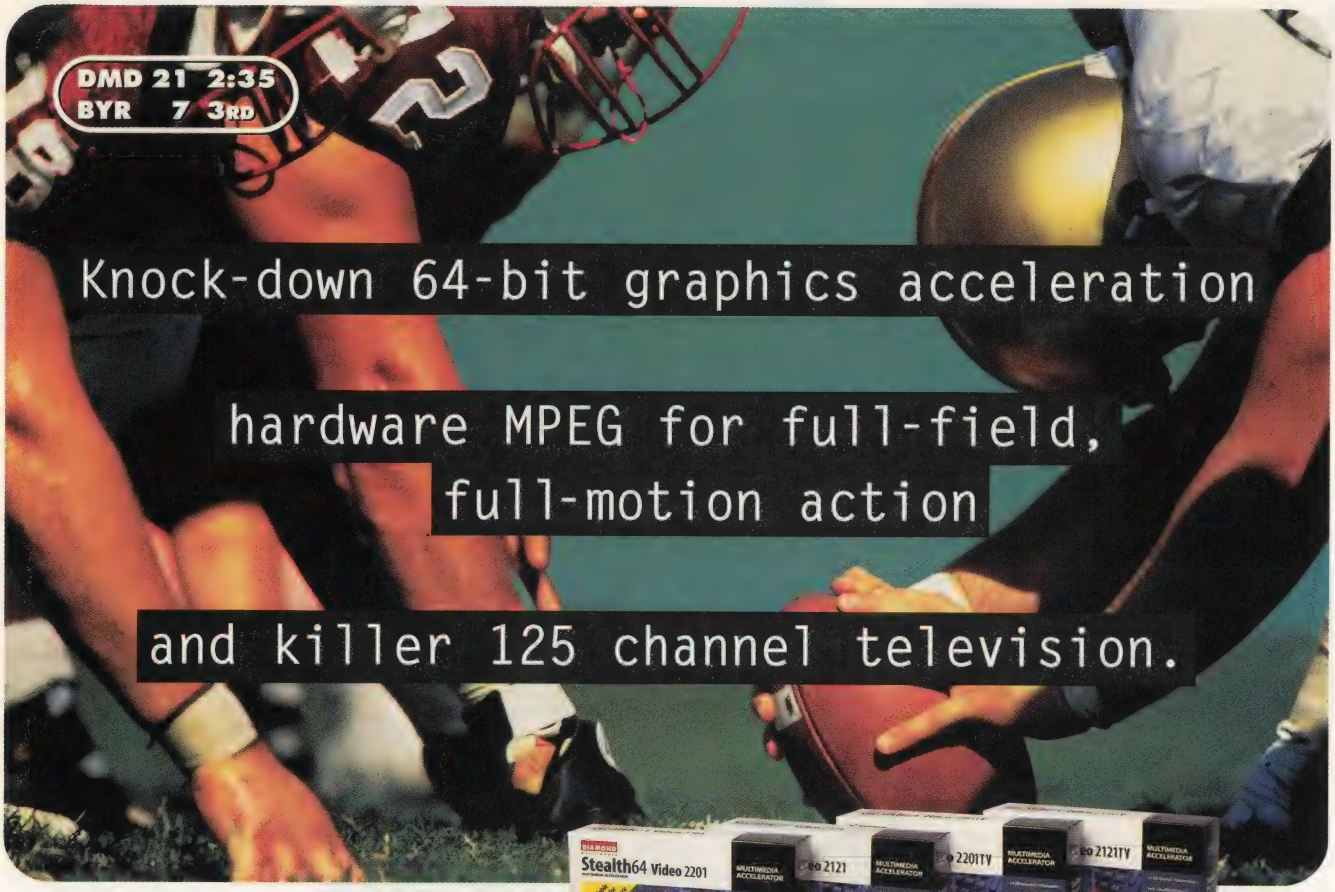
Faxaway

Email: info@faxaway.com

Trying to get in touch with someone overseas is not a cheap proposition. Since phone rates make even the most cursory of dialogues as expensive as a CD, many people have opted for faxes as an easy way to get a lot of information overseas in one quick transmission. (This, of course, does not apply to people with e-mail, but we can't all be wired in). But even normal faxing can cost a bundle—a call to Pakistan weighs in at a hefty $5.60 for one measly minute.

Faxaway, however, takes overseas costs and trims them with a meat cleaver. Anyone with e-mail can use this service as easily as dropping a note across the hallway—all you have to do is send material to the number you're faxing at Faxaway (example: 7089167225@faxaway.com) and they send it at a drastically reduced rate. Not only is the cost cheaper, but they even bill you in six-second increments to make the charge more precise. Is it worth it? Absolutely. Managing Editor Alex Gordon sent a fax to his

mom in New Zealand for a miniscule 19 cents, as compared to a cost of $3.27 via AT&T. It's fast, cheap, and the quality (according to Alex's mom) is equivalent to any other fax. For those people trying to keep in touch with overseas cronies, it's a heck of a lot easier than making them find an ISP provider in Guinea-Bissau.



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Stealth64 Video 2121TV	▪ 1MB (upgradable to 2MB) DRAM
Stealth64 Video 2201TV	▪ 2MB DRAM
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Vertical refresh:	Up to 120Hz
Max resolution:	1280 x 1024
Bus type:	PCI
Optional hardware:	▪ MPEG Video Player 1100 daughtercard ▪ DTV 1100 TV tuner card — **2121, 2201**
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weird on the web

Bagpipes Go to the Movies
http://www.ems.psu.edu/~fraser/PipesMovies.html

You want an action film, but your date would rather see a romantic comedy. Why not compromise on your next visit to Blockbuster and rent a bagpipe movie? Finally, thanks to this site there's an online resource detailing every cinematic appearance of the unwieldy wind instrument. Amazingly, according to the list, your choices aren't nearly as limited as you might think. Besides obvious Highland flicks like *Brigadoon* and *Braveheart*, bagpipes figure prominently in movies as diverse as *Army of Darkness* and *Meatballs*. Staying home tonight? The site thoughtfully includes TV references as well, ranging from last year's *Simpsons* Halloween special to a Burger King commercial.

The Fountainhead, Starring Skull Force
http://dig.netcentral.net/vx/founthd.html

Robert Lee has created a site for all of you who haven't yet gotten around to drudging through the massive books of Ayn Rand. In his site, Fragile Liquid, Lee kindly hyper-condensed Rand's masterpiece *The Fountainhead* into 12 panels with scenes performed by a slate of action figures. *Classic Comics* must be shaking in its boots with compelling dialogue like this:

Gail Wynand: Now that I've met Howard Roark, I don't think I'll kill myself, and I'll put all the resources of my vast publishing empire to work championing him! Let's get married, Dominique!!!

Dominique: Okay.

The cast, however, is B-list at best (no G.I. Joe or *Star Wars* figures here), with Howard Roark played by Skull Force and Dominique Francon played by Sue Richards of the Fantastic Four (although Lee did manage to secure Grover from *Sesame Street* for a jury cameo). Now we're just waiting for the Masters of the Universe version of *Atlas Shrugged*.

The Contortion Home Page
http://www.escape.com/-silverbk/contortion/

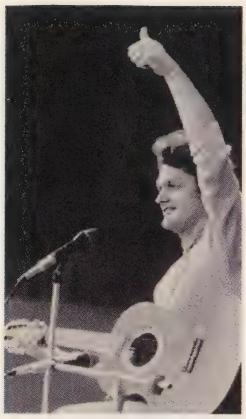
OW! OW! OW! Man alive, this page hurts. We wouldn't have winced this much at a site dedicated to groin injuries caused by soccer balls. The human body, we quickly found out at this home page, is much more flexible than we ever imagined—the women featured here are twisted into positions Stretch Armstrong never even tried. The photo gallery is truly a thing to behold, though there's a lot of educational merit to this site as well; the X-ray Study of a Contortionist is actually quite a fascinating read. Oh, and lest we forget (as if it needed saying)—don't try this at home.

"The women featured here are twisted into positions Stretch Armstrong never even tried"

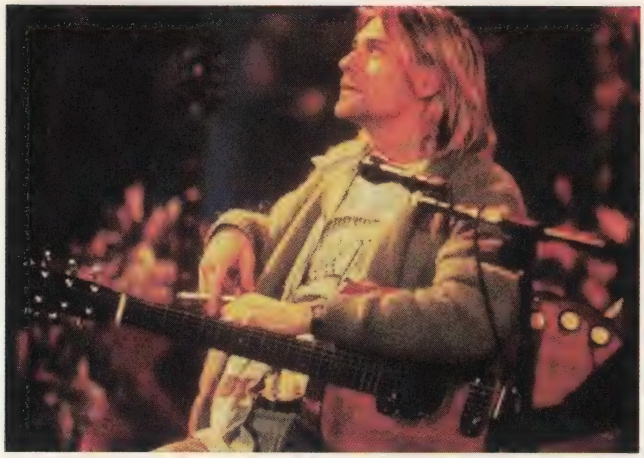
– THE CONTORTION HOME PAGE

The Dead People Server
http://web.syr.edu/~rsholmes/dead/index.html

Whatever happened to Fay Wray? Well, at least we know the original King Kong love interest is alive. All those Kennedys, dead yet or no? If you need to know if a celebrity has gone to that Great Green Room in the Sky or has been otherwise terminally inconvenienced, this is the place to find out. In many instances,



WHAT DO THESE THREE MUSICIANS HAVE IN COMMON? THEY'RE ALL ON THE BILL AT THE BIG CONCERT HALL IN THE SKY.

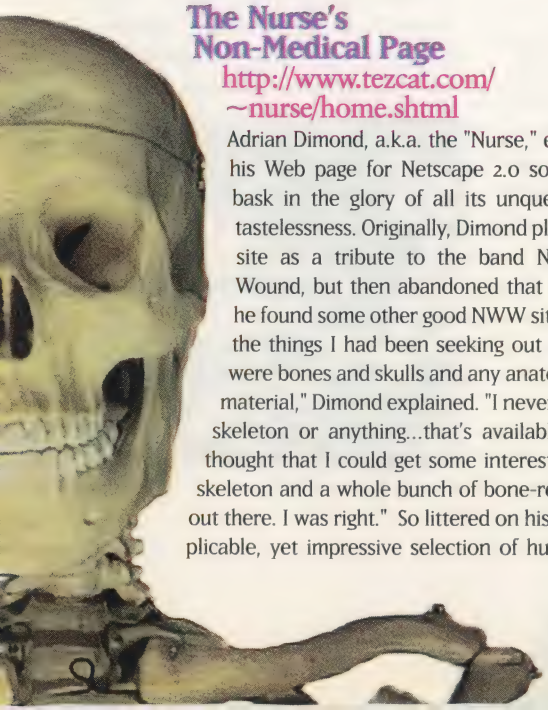


author Rich Holmes has offered a nugget of insight into the famous person's demise, noting that John Belushi died of stupidity on March 5, 1982, while L. Ron Hubbard is only marginally more dead than Elvis Presley. Don't expect all your questions answered, however. Of Jimmy Hoffa, Holmes has left that passage blank. As for dead porn stars, check out http://www.xmission.com/-legalize /asm/dead-stars.html.

The Nurse's Non-Medical Page

http://www.tezcat.com/~nurse/home.shtml

Adrian Dimond, a.k.a. the "Nurse," enhanced his Web page for Netscape 2.0 so you can bask in the glory of all its unquestionable tastelessness. Originally, Dimond planned the site as a tribute to the band Nurse with Wound, but then abandoned that idea when he found some other good NWW sites. "One of the things I had been seeking out on the 'net were bones and skulls and any anatomy-related material," Dimond explained. "I never found a full skeleton or anything...that's available now. So I thought that I could get some interest by putting a skeleton and a whole bunch of bone-related artwork out there. I was right." So littered on his site is an inexplicable, yet impressive selection of human skulls, idol



EVERY SO OFTEN, we find a web site we'd like to share that might be in BAD TASTE or a SHOCK to our gentler readers. So for THE DARING, check out this page that shows Twinkies aren't the only ones with A SHELF LIFE. Of course, these display items are WELL PAST their expiration dates.

enter@ your own risk*

Remember, we WARNED YOU...

http://www.sirius.com/~dbh/momias.html

kook du jour

Sherman Skolnick, Contributor to *Conspiracy Nation*, rantings occasionally available in alt.conspiracy and alt.activism.

Skolnick has a knack for exposing artifice and intrigue that would make Oliver Stone blush. Regarding the O.J. Simpson trial, the prosecution and mainstream media got it all wrong. According to Skolnick, the double murder was the result of a turf war between the Japanese and Mexican mafia caused because Nicole was selling drugs from O.J.'s fast food restaurants (with the help of crooked L.A. cops). The murders were even captured on "see-in-the-dark" video by the DEA, claims Skolnick, and Judge Lance Ito and his wife were also part of the cover-up. Don't even askabout Ron Goldman's Hepatitis B and the curse of the glove. Skolnick gets all his information from inside sources, whom he never reveals. Among other Skolnick theories: The Pope and cotton growers were in cahoots to kill Abe Lincoln; billionaire Warren Buffett is financed by the dope that is still in Coca-Cola, made by a chemical company that has ties to Chicago Mayor Richard Daley (who poisoned the former mayor). Check out Skolnick for yourself in select issues of the e-zine *Conspiracy Nation* in the newsgroups listed above; We just can't do justice to his theories here.

dolls and power tools. Despite this apparent non-medical connection, the Nurse's page has been besieged by health professionals in search of real, technical data. "I've had to post a lot of notices to those in the nursing profession to they don't get confused."

The Nose Page
http://www.well.com/user/cynsa/nosepage.html

Home to the olfactory nerves and epicenter for sinus trouble, the nose often has been misunderstood and underrated despite its prominent position on virtually everyone's face. Now, however, you can enter the Nose Page, billed as "your source for nasal information," wherein you'll find brilliant full-color, vivid representations of noses big and small, pug and non-pug. Plus, hear how the author, Steve G. Bonorris, once put beans up his own nostrils in a heartwarming tale about the legendary Bonorris family genetic miscue.

Celebrity Snack Palace
http://www.inch.com/~snack/snack.html

No celebrities, few snacks and definitely not a palace. Sample from fare that ranges from Links That Stink to the couple's William Shatner answering machine tape (with an excerpt of "Mr. Tambourine Man," featured last month in *IU*). Other great sections include Mounds of Sounds, which features WAV samples from Captain Beefheart and bad TV sitcoms. We also like to keep the CSP's Primal Scream button page on our hotlist; with a long scream for particularly difficult days and a short one when things are going a little better, it's a definite must to relieve a little afternoon post-lunch tension. We must warn you, some of their selections are rather graphic and more than a few are not exactly in the best taste.

No celebrities, few snacks and definitely not a palace.

-CELEBRITY SNACK PALACE

The Trans-Canada Traffic Lights
http://www.brandonu.ca/~ennsnr/Traffic/

The very definition of obsession, Neil Enns aims to collect images of every traffic light on the Trans-Canada Highway and post them on his site. But like the atomic scientists working on the Super Collider, it seems Enns' ambition is exceeding his budget. So far Enns has captured only a smattering of lights in his native Manitoba. He notes that he sadly lacks the economic means necessary to capture shots of lights from the far-flung stretches of the Great White North. But fear not, signalphiles, Enns has a detailed list of instructions for how you can help his project as well as a strict list of criteria for what actually constitutes a traffic light on the highway. Make sure you check out the light at Highway 155 and Highway 100 just outside of Winnepeg—it's a beaut, eh?

VISIT THE BAT BOY AT THE CELEBRITY SNACK PALACE.

Mr. Angst
http://unix1.utm.edu/~jfieser/angst.htm

Perhaps the most laudable advice columnist on the Web, Mr. Angst answers all questions with hostility, offering up a vigorous attack on society and life as we know it. Even the most simple queries, such as whether Bud is the King of Beers, qualify for a lengthy answer: "Having stooped temporarily to your level, my dear Mr. Sixpack, I now elevate my discussion with the following warning. The happy-go-lucky Joe Sixpacks of the world are in for a rude awakening. Some day a can of beer will be snapped open only to have a grotesque beast lunge forth and devour its prey. That beast is life itself." Dear Abby had better watch out.

The Wall O'Shame
http://www.milk.com/wall-o-shame/

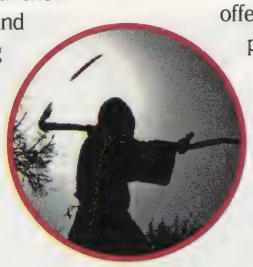
As if displays of human folly weren't prevalent enough on the Web (haven't we seen enough Anna Nicole Smith shrines?), Dan Bornstein takes compiling idiocy one step further by uploading a series of exemplary inanities onto his

weird on the web

Wall O'Shame. With a few images (though not enough) and stories ranging from lapses in NRA logic to a guy given a bill for 62 billion dollars by the IRS, The Wall O'Shame functions like a lengthened News of the Weird, culling its tidbits of absurdity from just about any source of weirdness the author comes across. For a shining example of American vacuity in its full glory, check out "I Want My Two Dollars," an amazing tale of trying to buy a burrito at Taco Bell with a $2 bill.

The Burrito Personality Test
http://www.infobahn.com/pages/rito.html

Surprisingly, what you order in your burrito says a great deal about your personality, or so goes the theory at this interactive homage to the world's most perfect foodstuff. An example of the wisdom of burrito analysis: Say you order chicken, cheddar cheese, tomato, onion, sour cream and salsa verde. According to the site, this means "you show an ability to bring balance and fullness to all things, including the toppings of your burrito." With dozens of burrito combinations, there's even a burrito for each of Roseanne's personalities.



Guest Stars of *Hawaii Five-O*
http://cs.ucr.edu/~tutup/hstars.html

You know the catch phrase "Book 'em Danno," but have you ever really noticed just who Danno was booking? At The Big Guest Stars of *Five-O* site, Todd Witteles has compiled a list of celebrities who appeared on television's seminal Polynesian police program. In the days before *The Love Boat*, this crime drama was the place for has-beens and wanna-bes alike, ranging from Alice's Mel, Vic Tayback, to the dean of physical comedy, John Ritter. And who can forget the late Robert Reed's impressive histrionics in episode 252, "The Meighan Conspiracy"?

Zombie Death Dungeon
http://www.gnli.com/zombie/

Let's get one thing straight right now: Zombies are not your friends. Zombies are not movie stars. Zombies have no mercy. Zombies have zero capacity to love. Zombies have but two purposes: Kill human beings and eat them. That's the message offered at this sight of extreme oddity. Look at photos of bizarre folks that seem particularly repugnant, if not zombie-like. Check out prose capturing a certain scary portion of your psyche that you typically would rather not explore. We especially liked the photos of the walking undead. It sort of reminded us of ourselves on deadline.

The Phallic Symbol Page
http://www.cs.und.nodak.edu/~gibbens/phallic.html

As the author notes, "Don't worry, there will not be images of some dude's schlong on here...It's strictly for phallic symbols." The most notable element is a massive root held in the hands of a bewildered fellow who doesn't know what to do. Seeing as we're based right outside of Chicago, we'll never look at the Sears Tower in quite the same way again.

classic weird on the web

The Mentos FAQ 5.0
http://www3.gse.ucla.edu/~cjones/mentos-faq.html

We thought about renaming this Classic Fresh Site on the Web, in honor of this month's selection. This refreshing testament to the popularity of the Freshmaker has grown exponentially from its humble genesis on Sept. 2, 1994. That day Heath Doerr, a Purdue student, had the vision to gather all of what he knew of these invigorating candies and put it into an easy-to-swallow FAQ format.

Anyone in touch with their freshness knows that the fascination with Mentos stems not from their confectionery qualities. What makes Mentos so fresh and full of life are the commercials, so it makes sense the most robust part of the FAQ remains the hilarious synopses of the ads that display members of the fresh generation coping in an increasingly unfresh world using the only tool at their disposal, Mentos, the Freshmaker. Study their lessons and you too can learn how to get out of a tight parking space, handle a driver stopping in the crosswalk or deal with a potentially day-ruining break in your high heel with a smile and a fresh attitude. The origins of these oddly compelling ads are a subject of debate within the FAQ. Some of the ads were filmed with freshness in Europe while others were made full of life in California.

Aside from the ads, the FAQ dissects the physical characteristics of the candy's appealing freshness, with additional discussion of the Anti-Mento, the decidedly non-fresh Mint Chew. Responsibility for the FAQ now falls to the Gathering, a group of six Temple University students. In typical Freshmaker fashion, the group saved the FAQ from stagnating when Doerr graduated. The site maintains its freshness thanks to a legion of Mentoheads—more than 70 people are credited with submissions—proving once and for all Mentos do make one fresh and full of life.

So Fresh and full of life, Mentos inspired a great FAQ.
(For more on the Mentos FAQ, check out page 72)

File Edit View Go Bookmarks Options Directory Help

Netsite: \\Web_pages.we're_glad_we\can't.find!

What's New! | What's Cool! | Upgrades | Net Search | Net Directory | Newsgroups | Handbook

WELCOME TO THE ADULTS-ONLY ABSTINENCE HOME PAGE

Sure there are hundreds of Web sites that let you download pictures of pornography and sex, but we're different. We think men and women don't need to have sex in order to have a good time together. And we bet there's plenty of people out there who enjoy downloading images of consenting adults refraining from any sexual activity whatsoever.

ABSTINENT SWINGERS DOM, ELLEN, FRITZ AND MARY-JO

"Mmm, delicious pig," comments Ellen.
"Yeah, that was a feisty little guy, right up to the end," chuckles Dom.
"Honestly," Mary-Jo laughs, "sometimes I don't know which you men like better: eating the pig or killing it."
"Definitely eating it," pipes up Fritz, his mouth full, "definitely!"

ABSTINENT HETEROS MIKE AND BETTY

"Wow," says Mike, motioning toward the furniture display at the antique shop, "look at that! A couch from 1923 for $2500!"
"Indeed," comments Betty, "too bad the *price* isn't from 1923!"

ABSTINENT LESBIANS BETH AND PATTY

"Come on, come on," mutters Beth, shaking the dice and landing on a clue.
"The Hardy Boys!" exclaims Beth, "I love this game!"
"Me too," laughs Patty, "But I like it better when I'm winning."

SALVATORE AND GRETCHEN

"Ah, thisa ski, she gonna be better than-a-new," Salvatore says, his dark brown Italian eyes sparkling. "It'sa hard work, but we do a gooda job on it, yes?"
"Sure," says Gretchen, carefully helping Salvatore tighten the binding, "If only skiing were this easy to master!"

OTHER LINKS

The Abstinence Chat-Room
24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Chat with beautiful abstinent men and women ready to discuss just about anything but sex. Or for the really adventurous, talk to two completely abstinent men or women at once. $7.99 per minute

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ARE ONLINE SERVICES dead?

BY SIMSON L. GARFINKEL

You would never know that AOL, Prodigy and CompuServe have a serious problem by looking at their balance sheets. Last year was their best year ever. The reason is simple: The Internet is booming, and for most people in the country, the easiest way to get electronic mail and be able to surf the World Wide Web is by signing up with one of the nation's Big Three online service providers.

America Online, CompuServe and Prodigy have literally been spamming the world with floppy disks and CD-ROMs containing their software. You see them everywhere: in the mail, bundled around magazines, dropped in piles at universities and conferences. Buy a modem, and you'll get disks for two or three of the services. Buy a computer, and the software's probably preinstalled. The spams are coming so fast and furious that many of us have been able to stop buying floppy disks—we simply rely on erasing the AOL disks that show up every week.

And yet, tough times for these companies may only be a few months away. That's because nearly everybody is getting into the Internet service provider business, driving costs down to bargain-basement levels. Meanwhile, growth of the Web is pushing content and electronic communities out from under the clutches of the online behemouths. That spells trouble for these online giants, which have traditionally used their discussion groups, chat rooms, file libraries and online databanks as their primary tool for attracting new customers. With the growth of the Web, this competitive advantage is quickly evaporating.

"I think that maybe two years from now there will be no difference between what we call an online service and what we call an Internet service," says Steve Franco, an analyst with the Yankee Group in Boston who closely follows the Internet and the online world. "Either the online service providers will migrate and become ISPs, or they will be forced out of the business. The model of controlling proprietary content will not work in a world dominated by the World Wide Web."

But if they're going to compete, they're going to have a rough ride. That's because a new generation of Internet access providers are about to hit the ground running. Each of these firms has revenue, capital and market presence that dwarfs all three online services—combined. With names like

ART BY TOM COLICOTT

Contine

MCI, AT&T and Pacific Bell, these firms are the schoolyard bullies, ready to jump into the sandbox and take whatever they want.

So why aren't the "Big Three" quaking in their boots?

* * *

If you live in New England, then you have probably heard of TIAC, formally known as The Internet Access Company. But if you don't live in New England, then you probably never will.

TIAC got its start in January 1994, in Bedford, Mass., using a a handful of maxed-out credit cards for capital. "We now have 70 employees in Bedford. We have a satellite office on Broadway in New York City. We have a satellite office in South Windsor, Conneticut. We have POPs (points of presence) basically all over Eastern and Western Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Hampshire and Rhode Island. By the end of December, we will also have Washington, D.C., New Jersey and Maine. By this time next year, or most likely much sooner, we expect to have coverage in excess of 2,500 communities east of the Mississippi River," says Jeff Aizley, a spokesperson for the company. In November, TIAC boasted two high-speed T1 lines, with a third T1 "on order."

TIAC is a local Internet Service Provider, one step up from the "mom and pop" ISPs that have sprouted up like mushrooms in most of the country's major metropolitan areas during the past year. Like most ISPs, TIAC's prices are far cheaper than the Big Three online services—$29 a month gets you 100 hours of service, $49 gets you 300 hours. TIAC is also offering high-speed access to the Internet through ISDN, a kind of digital telephone service, for an astonishingly low price of just $39 for 100 hours.

As for customers, "That number grows by a couple hundred every day," says Aizley. "Last I checked, it was 13,500. I can open up our user database and tell you exactly...14,526 customers right now. Oops, make that 14,527."

And yet, for all of Aizley's bravado, TIAC isn't even a blip on AOL's radar screens. Each day last fall, when TIAC was growing by a couple hundred customers every day, AOL was adding more than 8,000 subscribers. The two companies are in a completely different league.

Analysts say that it's the small Internet service providers who have cause to be alarmed. "There are something like 1,400 Internet service providers in the country today," says Yankee Group's Franco. "I would be surprised if that number is bigger than 400 at this time next year. As these companies continue to grow, they really don't have the expertise to scale their networks."

It's a completely different business to provide service to 1,000 people, 100,000 people or a million and more. For example, TIAC currently keeps track of all of its customers using a single Filemaker Pro database. Last year, when a bolt of lightning hit the company's Bedford offices, TIAC's entire network went down. Unless TIAC is able to overhaul and redevelop its network, its internal information systems and its very way of doing business, the company won't be able to expand and could die under the weight of its own customers. Franco expects that many of the smaller ISPs will either merge with larger firms or close up shop.

If the TIACs of the world aren't a fear to AOL, a more serious threat might be the large-scale ISPs that have hundreds of thousands of subscribers, such as San Jose-based NETCOM On-Line Communication Services, which last year grew 221 percent, from 41,500 subscribers in 1994 to 232,800 subscribers in 1995, or PSINet, which claims to service 1.5 million people as the result of providing Internet connections to more than 6,000 organizations.

"Baloney," says Ted Leonsis, president of America Online Services Co. "Every month we are replicating NETCOM," he explains, citing AOL's monthly growth rate of 250,000 additional subscribers.

Leonsis says that he isn't worried about the regional Internet service providers at all. "I don't think that is a good business. If you just look at the history of media, it is the big brands" that survive, he says.

Joshua Harrif, president of Jupiter Communications, a

Fair Fight?

THE CONTENDERS:	AOL	COMPUSERVE	PRODIGY
CUSTOMERS*	4 MILLION	2.2 MILLION	1.4 MILLION
SALES ($M)	394.3	582.8	200.0
%CHANGE:	277.7%	36.6%	11.1%
EMPLOYEES:	527	3,000	600
YEAR END:	JUNE 95	APRIL 95	DECEMBER 94

*(ESTIMATE AS OF DEC. 95)

strategic intelligence firm in New York, agrees. Companies that are just providing access to the Internet "aren't providing any kind of community or product or customer support related to the applications and service," says Harrif, who closely monitors the online world. Indeed, says Harrif, companies like TIAC and NETCOM are merely providing a commodity on-ramp to the Internet, which makes them vulnerable to any company that is better funded and can take better advantage of economies of scale.

"If Microsoft comes along—and Microsoft might be the number four player by the time your article is published—and they say 'Hey, we are going to do this better and cheaper,' then the ISPs are essentially out of business," says Harrif. "Clearly CompuServe, AOL and Prodigy are not in the commodity business. They all have individual products that are better or worse to varying degrees. They are unique entertainment/information-oriented products."

PSINet has come to this same conclusion, says William Schrader, PSINet's chief executive officer. That's why PSI bought Pipeline, an award-winning Internet provider in New York City. Pipeline was best known for local content—movie reviews, restaurants, politics. PSI is now trying to clone the Pipeline model in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Washington, D. C.

"We think that there is real value in it," says Schrader. "We are learning from CompuServe, AOL and Prodigy what people like. And we are emulating that in our online group. Hopefully we are adding in freedom of use, freedom of access, (and) freedom of choice."

PSI is also trying to move beyond the information market. Late last fall, the company announced its collaborative venture with Spectrum Holobyte to develop multiplayer computer games that would let gaming enthusiasts compete with up to 5,000 other real-live players. At the time, PSINet's senior vice president and chief technical officer, Martin L. Schoffstall, confidently predicted that the potential market for online games was an order of magnitude larger than the market for information services. Whether he is right should be proved later this year and next.

* * *

The big online service providers know that the real competition is not from below, it's from above. Possibly way above.

All around the country, the regional Bell operating companies are gearing up to become Internet service providers. These companies have the money, personnel and technical expertise to bring the Internet to every home and business in the country. And they are at an incredible competitive advantage, since they already have the customers.

Right now, they are building their networks—big ones.

"We have multiple 45Mbit/sec connections into the Internet San Francisco network access point," says Rick Hronicek, president of Pacific Bell Internet Services. "Our overall Internet access strategy is complete, full service to all markets. We are already doing a lot of technically sophisticated businesses now. We plan to offer dial-in ISDN access early next year. That would be directed at both consumers and medium-sized businesses. If you think about it, you can come in all the way from a 28.8 analog dial modem, step up to 128kbit/sec ISDN, and go all the way to 155Mbits/sec next year."

Hronicek knows that the future isn't just access—it's content too—and so he's planning on offering that as well, including chat services and discussion groups. But there would be an important difference between Pacific Bell's services and the groups on AOL: "Ours would have much more of a local flavor," he says. "We think that is one of the things that the online services are missing. It is difficult for them to zero in on local issues. A lot of people would rather discuss (things) locally, where they could (easily reach out and) meet each other outside the 'net."

Pacific Bell may be in the forefront of the local Regional Bell Operating Companies (RBOCs), but it

AOL: Heaven or Hell?

Pity poor America Online. Fighting a nearly constant public-relations battle, in the past year the mammoth online service has been subjected to everything from viruses to lawsuits to mass embarrassment sites virtually screaming "AOL Sucks."

At press time, a Trojan Horse virus was found circulating in e-mail through the AOL network. In mid-November, the company was warning users not to download files or to open e-mail from addresses they did not recognize. The irony factor was high: The real virus appeared just as the long-running hoax about the similar "Good-Times" virus infiltrating the AOL system was begining to die. The Federal Communications Commission and the Pentagon studied the system and declared the earlier alleged virus a hoax. But the virus last fall was dangerously real. Opening the e-mail containing the virus would not endanger a user's computer, an AOL spokesperson said. But trying to open the attached file, AOL Gold through its install.exe file could wipe out an entire hard drive.

Meanwhile, hackers have taken a keen interest in AOL's software. Tracking through bugs in the system's front end, hackers created a program called AOLhell that allowed those who used it to log in anonymously, read other people's mail and disrupt chat rooms—for free. Internet Underground *downloaded a third-level beta version from http://www.intersurf.com/~materva/aolsucks.html. The hacking abilities were somewhat tame, but it made us wonder what would happen if hackers found truly serious flaws in the software, allowing access to credit card numbers, for example.*

We also downloaded the software from http://www.intersurf.com/~materva/aolsucks.html, one of the many AOL Sucks Web pages that have sprung up in the past year. At least two of the maintainers of such sites say they have been threatened with legal action by AOL. The online service's lawyers also reportedly threatened the CandyMan, profiled on page 78. While you can get instructions for making dozens of bombs at his site, thanks to AOL lawyers, you can't download the AOLhell software from CandyLand at http://www.mcs.net/~candyman/ Setting up a site to talk about why AOL sucks isn't exactly original. Among those already in operation (We'd list the individual names except they all have some variation on "Why AOL Sucks"):

http://www.cloud9.net/~jegelhof/
http://www.tile.net/tile/news/altaols.html
http://www.itw.com/~byazji/aol.html
ftp://ftp.crl.com/users/ro/destiny/aol
http://www.iglou.com/members/will.html
http://powered.cs.yale.edu:8000/~miller/aol/aol.html

Of course, there's also an anti-CompuServe site at http://www.charm.net/~turtle/cis.html. Don't get us started on anti-Microsoft Pages, there's at least half a dozen of those, too. The Web sites sprouted up following the creation of alt.aol.sucks, a newsgroup for those with beefs about the company. Among their gripes were remarks about bad connections, slow download time, inappropriate billing, high costs for moderate usage, difficulty with canceling the subscription and a support staff that often was less than helpful.

A major complaint about AOL has been their censorship of chat rooms and bulletin boards. AOL detractors say the company maintains a secret list of words and subject matter banned in public postings. Among the forbidden are: the words "defecation" "submissive," "horny" and "sexual devices," and discussion about sexual bondage techniques or cross-dressing. AOL workers oversee the rooms, deleting the objectionable and canceling the accounts of flagrant violators. To those used to the uncensored newsgroup atmosphere of the 'net in general, this type of Big Brother activity comes off as unsettling.

At first, the anti-AOL comments were aimed at the compnay, most made by dispirited current or former AOL users. Then, the hostility became directed toward the users themselves. Several sites began blocking out AOL altogether. One example: a popular *X-Files* fan site at http://www.ssc.com/~roland/x-files/x-files.html. The site requires users to go through a phony security login in order to gain access (random words work). But so many AOL users couldn't figure it out, says Webmaster Liem Bahneman, that he opted to just block them out.

Another user in Australia offers software to block AOLers from sites at ftp://ftp.netcom.com/pub/po/poulosio/poulosio.html.

Many users were flamed in newsgroups simply for having an aol.com suffix. The theory: Anyone who can't figure out how to access the 'net by some other means must be stupid, lazy or both.

Worse than flames against the company is the class-action lawsuit filed against it last fall by a group of California lawyers. The lawyers claim that AOL overcharged subscribers by rounding up estimated time charges. While the overall effect means pocket change to individual users, it could mean big money for the company. If the lawyers win any settlement, it will probably mean big money for them but probably little monetary recoup for AOL users themselves.

Does AOL worry about all these problems? From what we can gather, not really. Ultimately, the company's aim is to make money, like all business ventures. The widgets they manufacture are abstract: time online. Despite the issues raised by those in alt.aol.sucks or the AOL Suck home pages, the company continues to rake in hordes of cash, from both amazing numbers of new users and through business agreements with content providers. The debate about whether AOL really offers Internet access, a subject of huge debate among anti-AOLers, seems irrelevant to company representatives.

"There's no money changing hands on the Web" gleefully remarks Ted Leonsis, President of AOL Services Company. At AOL, there's lots of cash flow. That's all that matters, for now.

- Kathleen Flinn

certainly isn't alone. "We do not provide Internet access directly at this time," says Ted Creech, a spokesperson for Bell South. Nevertheless, Bell South is building its own sophisticated IP network through its coverage area. "From a Bell South and an RBOC perspective, there are some regulatory questions as to how much of an end-retailer of Internet access we can be."

Indeed, the regulatory question is the big wild card. Regulatory hassles might keep the Baby Bells out of the Internet market for a few years, but in the end, it is a sure bet that they will be offering dial tone and IP together at a single low price.

Competition in the Internet arena is also likely to come from AT&T, MCI Communications and Sprint, who are all planning on offering Internet access with long-distance service. These three companies are in a good position to sell Internet access to consumers, since they already run large chunks of the Internet backbone. Then there are the cable companies, many of which are conducting trails of high-speed access to the home using special "cable modems," which can offer speeds that are 20 times faster than a conventional telephone line.

Finally, for a really out-of-this-world Internet service provider, how about Hughes Network Service, part of the multibillion dollar Hughes aerospace and defense conglomerate? Last year, Hughes turned on its DirecPC Internet access. The service has national coverage today and gives people 400 kbits/sec access for surfing the web. Cost: just $30/month.

"The big guys haven't arrived yet," says Bill Day, vice president and general manager of Prodigy Services Company. Right now, Prodigy is making a lot of money by providing access to the Internet. Day says that Prodigy is investing that money in its own operations, trying to make its network more efficient in an effort to lower costs. Hopefully, when the "big guys" come to the market, Day says, they won't be able to underprice his service.

But Day acknowledges that it will only be a matter of time before the access becomes a commodity, "or even a loss-leader business... At that point, we may or may not have a primary market share. But we do now, and frankly, now is a great time to have a market share."

Nevertheless, Day knows that Prodigy's real future is probably out there on the Web.

* * *

Prodigy was the first of the big three service providers to offer access to the World Wide Web, and in many ways, the company is now making itself over in the Web's image. Prodigy has adopted HTML, the language of the Web, as the language for its own internal systems. It's also starting up a "web hosting" business, allowing its content providers to have a home on the Web and one on Prodigy's service simultaneously. And Prodigy is partnering with firms such as JC Penney and L.L. Bean to make shopping on the Web a reality. Will consumers be too scared to type their credit card numbers into a Web screen? Don't worry: Prodigy has operators standing by on toll-free numbers, ready to take your order by phone.

Prodigy has been supported in part by advertisements from day one. As a result, the company has much less to lose by putting its proprietary pages directly on the World Wide Web. Indeed, it might even make more money by doing so. "The Prodigy you see in a year or 18 months may be very different than the Prodigy you see today," says Day. "And that's perfectly healthy."

AOL is adopting a somewhat different strategy. "You have to understand that we are the largest Internet provider in the world," says Leonsis. "We have an integrated browser in the core service that really doesn't differentiate between the Web and AOL." For the 'net-savvy cybercitizen who has simply got to have their PC on the Internet, AOL has its Global Network Navigator service, which offers direct Internet access.

TED LEONSIS, PRESIDENT OF AOL SERVICES: RUMORS OF THE ONLINE GIANT'S DEMISE HAVE BEEN GREATLY EXAGGERATED

But Leonsis says that today's World Wide Web is not a market that AOL is interested in. "I believe that today the Web is an anti-market. No one is paying for direct-dial access. Most 'net surfing is done during the day, via companies," the so-called play-at-work crowd. "Everyone talks about millions and millions of people on the 'net. Well, they are coming from their companies and not paying for it. The browser software is free. The server software is free. (Accessing) the Web sites are free. Who is surcharging? You can probably count them on one hand. In fact, most Web sites can't even get people to register! Advertisers are building their own Web sites, bypassing the ISPs. So there is no money exchanging hands anywhere!"

Leonsis believes that AOL's future is in the AOL "brand name." He thinks that people will pay money to access information, chat rooms and forums that are located underneath that brand. "Value will be defined via a kind of integrated approach, as opposed to just launching people onto the Internet."

CompuServe, meanwhile, is playing all sides—content provider, access provider, and network provider—largely because the company is actually three businesses.

CompuServe Information Services is the best known of the three. CIS is the service used by millions of Americans for electronic mail, software libraries and special-interest discussion

groups, which CompuServe calls "forums." But CompuServe also has a Network Services division, which essentially leases out the CompuServe network to more than 750 corporate customers across the world. One of those customers is VISA International, which uses the CompuServe network for verifying credit-card transactions. The CompuServe network has more than 450 points of presence, making CompuServe a local phone call for 96 percent of the population in the United States. Its backbone is currently a collection of T1 lines running at 1.544 mbits/sec; they are in the process of being upgraded to T3s, which run more than 30 times faster.

The third member of the family is CompuServe Seattle, formerly known as SPRY, Inc., which CompuServe bought in 1995 for $102 million. Before its purchase, SPRY was in the running to become a major online service in its own right, thanks to the success of its "Internet In a Box." Now that it is firmly part of the CompuServe family, the organization is central to CompuServe's plans for making even more money off the Internet craze.

"The market is growing by leaps and bounds," says Tim Oren, vice-president and general manager of CompuServe's Internet Division. Oren says that the dramatic growth of home computers in recent years is responsible for last year's sudden boom in the Internet.

"There are two neat things going on," explains Oren. "One is that more folks are getting enabled. The other is that all of the hype about the Internet is pre-educating people. Five years ago, you had to sit people down and tell them, 'Here is what an online service is, and here is why you need to care.' These days, practically every television, radio and newspaper article about the Internet is a free advertisement for CompuServe's online services."

But is CompuServe really the Internet? Oren wants you to think so. Today most people who use CompuServe access it through a proprietary communications protocol using CompuServe's CIM (CompuServe Information Manager) application. The next version of CIM, says Oren, will be based on the Internet's own PPP protocol. Once a subscriber is connected to CompuServe, he or she will actually be on the Internet and able to run any Internet-based application, such as Internet Relay Chat, NetPhone, or CU-SEEME. Simply by changing a few programs on its central computers, CompuServe will suddenly become the nation's largest dial-up Internet service provider.

But don't expect bargain-basement prices from CompuServe anytime soon. "We're not trying to be an all-you-can-eat for $20 access provider," says Oren. "That's not where the growth of the market is. We want to be value leaders, not price leaders."

Oren insists that CompuServe's real value is its experience in managing online discussion forums, helping businesses tailor their services to the online market, and online shopping. "Go and crash IRC (Internet Relay Chat) some night, and look at the general quality of conversation, and then look at the (CompuServe) forums.

"I see CompuServe as something of a premium Internet access provider... both in cost and benefits. Have you tried to get into Yahoo! on a Friday afternoon? Or Edgar? I know I'm willing to pay a premium for a service that gets me what I want, when I want it," says Jim Cameron, a former NBC News director and network radio anchor who now runs CompuServe's JFORUM (Journalism Forum). "Say what you will about the Internet: There is still far more content, more quickly available on CompuServe."

Clearly, the nation's online services aren't dead, or at least not yet. But it's unlikely that they will remain in their present form for more than a few years.

People forget, but in the early days of electricity, Edison's electric companies did a lot more than simply sell the juice that was starting to power the new economy. They also provided the light bulbs. They wired up your home. And they taught you how to use it.

Within a few years, the online services will probably be little more than hosts on the Internet. Already, it's possible to connect to America Online using TCP/IP and your local internet service provider. For an increasing number of AOL's customers, using TCP/IP instead of AOL's dial-ups means faster service and no busy signals. It also makes the connection a lot cheaper for AOL, so expect to see AOL recommending TCP/IP access more and more.

Online service providers of the future might be based on Web technology, they might use HotJava, or they might even use their own proprietary interfaces. But they probably won't be running large banks of modems, or maintaining their own national networks—at least, not within the same division. And if they are smart, they'll offer services with a regional and local flavor as well.

AOL, and to a lesser extent CompuServe and Prodigy, is modeling its future on today's big media corporations. With high production values and brand awareness, the company believes that it can become as successful as a major television network. Is that the right recipe for success? AOL thinks so. But the decline of the country's three leading networks and the growth of medium-sized cable channels would seem to indicate otherwise.

When the Internet is everywhere, it will be possible for AOL to lose its customers as fast as it has gained them. ○

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR SIMSON GARFINKEL WRITES ABOUT THE INTERNET FROM HIS NETWORKED HOME ON MARTHA'S VINEYARD. HE RUNS A SMALL ISP IN HIS SPARE TIME.

A brief history of the online world

CompuServe came first. Back in 1969, CompuServe was a small-time sharing company. By day, businesses that couldn't afford their own mainframes used CompuServe's. At night, the company let hobbyists and engineers dial in and chew the extra cycles that were spinning on the machines. The online market didn't exist—few people had ever seen a computer, let alone had one in their own house! Indeed, most people who dialed into CompuServe's computers didn't use a computer at all: Instead, they used a teleprinter or a "glass TTY" and a slow modem.

As CompuServe expanded into new geographic markets, it built its own data network so that customers could use the mainframes without paying outlandish long-distance telephone bills. CompuServe could effectively offer its customers cheaper long-distance rates because it is possible for a single long-distance telephone line to be carry conversations between many users at the same time using a technique called packet switching—the same fundamental technology that drives the Internet. In 1980, H&R Block, the tax preparation firm, bought CompuServe. At the time, CompuServe was earning $20 million a year. Last April, CompuServe's earnings reached $150 million, with total revenues of $583 million. It was also the first year that H&R Block had earned more from computer services than from preparing tax returns.

- Simson Garfinkel

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WHAT

ACC

Selling access to the 'net means handling an intangible, abstract product. Namely, time online.

Despite all the talk about the Internet reaching out to the masses, even with thousands of new people signing up for access, most people go online primarily for three reasons: e-mail, chat rooms and downloading files. There's no doubt about it. If this is all you want from cyberspace, the way to go is one of the major online services: America Online, Prodigy, CompuServe and the most recent entry, the Microsoft Network. Of course, with a little basic knowledge you can do all the same things with an Internet connection, but why bother if all you want to do is read mail from your brother at college, talk about *Star Trek* with people you don't know and download the latest rip-off of Tetris? For these basic consumers the choice in online services doesn't come down to hourly rates and tech specs but rather good old-fashioned brand loyalty. Think about how you pick a long-distance service; it's essentially the same. You're content with AT&T until the friendly, efficient MCI woman calls, offering you $50 cash to switch. You jump at the chance. Then, AT&T comes begging back with yet another cash inducement. But hold on, you just saw a Sprint ad, why not give

By Alex Gordon

Lately the toughest thing about getting online is choosing how to get there.

PRICE

them a chance? While all three phone companies drone on about how they have the service, sound quality and all that, you can't tell the difference. All you really want is the assurance there will be a dial tone. The same holds true with the major online services, inundating you with free discs, hours if you recruit friends and even, in a tip of the hat to the phone companies, lots of cute ads. Essentially, the major online services offer the same thing: easy-to-use interfaces that make mail retrieval, chat sessions and file downloading almost effortless. Users bounce from service to service, and who can blame them? With all those free discs floating around, why not get 10 free hours here and 10 free hours there? Aside from losing your e-mail address each and every month, there's no real disadvantage to this approach.

In fact, while all the online services brag about growth, a recent study by the INTECO Corporation shows that at least 6.2 million home computer users have tried and then canceled subscriptions to the major services. Sure, AOL has 3.7 million subscribers, but it's lost 2.9 million more. About 3.5 million have signed on then off Prodigy, leaving it with 1.4 million users. Similarly, CompuServe has 2.2 subscribers but has lost 2.1 million. Delphi is in the most trouble; more than 372,000 have canceled accounts, leaving the service with 46,000 subscribers, the study showed.

But what about the hardcore users looking for something more from an online service? Each of the biggies offer up a wealth of news, games, discussion groups, reference material and original content, but then again so does the Web. Sure, you can only read *Rolling Stone* on CompuServe or the *Weekly World News* on AOL, but say you want to read both? Well, with simple 'net connections from nationwide service providers like Earthlink and Pipeline, you may not be able to read *Rolling Stone* online, but you can read *Addicted to Noise*, created by former *Rolling Stone* editor Michael Goldberg, and countless other music 'zines. And though the *Weekly World News* has lots of bizarre content, the Web has a whole lot more.

In the end the online biggies may have written their own death sentence in their rush to provide access to the Web. Now that each online service provider has easy access to it, users who may have been perfectly comfortable in their online cul-de-sac may find much more. For some, that might be just enough incentive to swap an online service for direct access.

ESS?

Online services have content, while service providers often simply hook you up. Here's a comparative look at the major players. All the services offer support for Windows, DOS or Apple platforms and 28.8 bps access unless noted.

	America Online	Compuserve	Prodigy	MSN
The lure	10 free hours	10 free hours	10 free hours	10 free hours
The monthly deals	$9.95/5 hours free $2.95 each additional	$9.95/5 hours free $2.95 each additional	$9.95/5 hours free $2.95 each additional	$4.95/3 hours free $2.50 each additional
Frequent Plans	None	$24.95/20 hours $1.95 each additional	$29.95/30 hours $2.95 additional	$19.95/20 hours $2.00 each additional
Cost for 50 hours	$142.70	$83.45	$88.95	$79.95
800 number access	yes	yes	no	no
800 number access	$4.80 an hour	$6 an hour	N/A	N/A
Apple compatible?	yes	yes	yes	no
Web browser e-mail Usenet	GNN AOL AOL	Netlauncher CompuServe	Prodigy Prodigy Prodigy	Microsoft Internet Explorer Microsoft Exchange Microsoft Internet Explorer
Overall quality	★★★	★★★	★★	★★★★
Note on software	Standard Web browser doesn't support backgrounds	Charges for e-mail from Internet	Charges extra for Web, allows you to make home page	Web browser handles Netscape-enhanced backgrounds well doesn't support Apple
# of local dial-up cities	Hundreds	Hundreds	Hundreds	Hundreds
Bottom line	Expensive, often slow when large number of users sign on	Expensive, limited	Poor interface, extra for Web	Cheapest of commercial services, still working out bugs
WWW address	http://www.aol.com	http://www.compuserve.com	http://www.prodigy.com	http://www.msn.com
800 Number	800-827-6364	800-848-8199	800-PRODIGY	800-386-5550

Is the price right?

GNN	Pipeline	Netcom	Concentric	Total Access
Unlimited first month	14 days free	Nothing special	$1/2 months unlimited	Free 100K home page
$14.95/20 hours $1.95 each additional	$5/5 hours $1.50 each additional	$19.95/40 prime time $2 each additional	$20/20 hours $1.50 each additional	$19.95/15 hours $1.50 hour
$24.95/20 hours $1.95 each additional	$19.95 unlimited	Unlimited off-peak access	$29.95 unlimited	none
$83.45	$19.95	Depends on peak or off-peak	$29.95	$72.45
no	no	yes	yes	yes
N/A	N/A	8 cents/minute	$4.95 hour	$24.95 month/5 free
no	no	no	yes	yes
GNN GNN GNN	Pipeline Pipeline Pipeline	Netcruiser Netcruiser Netcruiser	Netscape Eudora None	Netscape Eudora None
★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Attractive interface, easy installation	Best deal, can use other browsers easily	Offers a variety of different hooks. You into gaming?	Software basics only	Requires $25 startup fee
Hundreds	Over 250	About a hundred	100	Around 100
Reasonable cost, well done	Cheap, simple and growing enormously	Popular alternative to online services	Great startup deal, bare-bones offer	Medium price range, better in California
http://www.gnn.com	http://www.usa.pipeline.com/	http://www.net.com.com	http://www.concentric.net	http://www.earthlink.net/
800-210-4949	800-453-7473	800-353-6600	800-745-2747	800-395-8425
GNN BEST OF THE NET	PIPELINE USA	NETCOM		EarthLink Network

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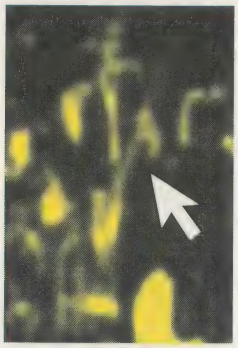

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the Underground

by Eric Snider

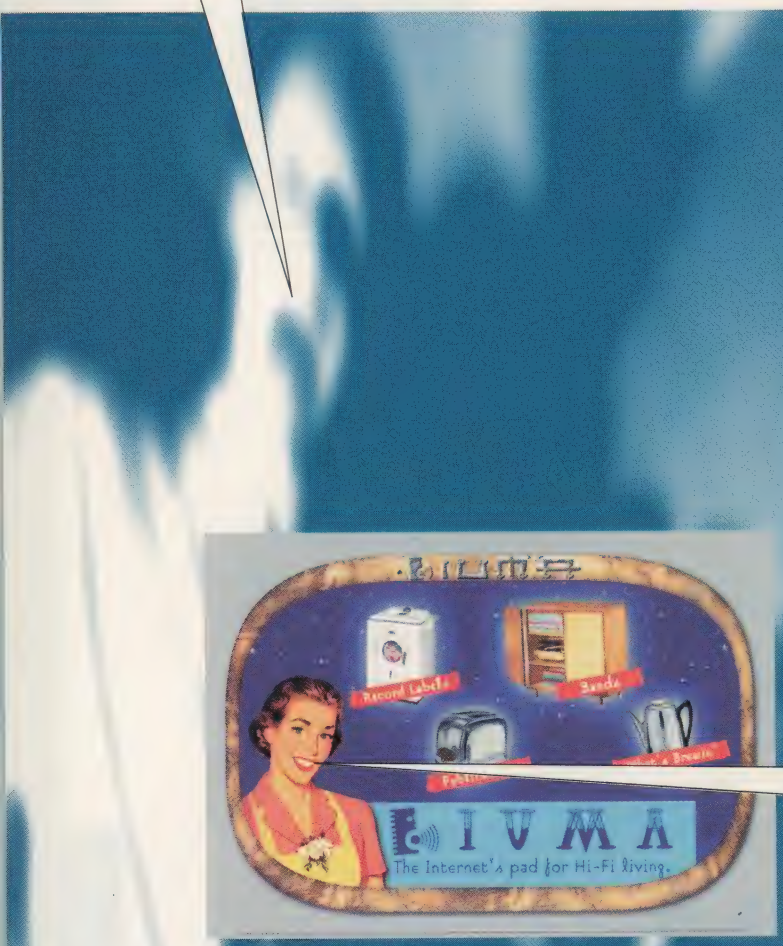
In the beginning there were talent scouts. Lore says they roamed the land looking for the next Bing Crosby. As the music business grew into Big Business, it became more insulated. The powerful A&R (artist and repertoire) men emerged. They were the ones who signed artists to record labels, which were becoming larger in size and fewer in number all the time. A&R people developed a reputation as unapproachable elitists ensconced in ivory towers. It seemed that all an up-and-coming band could do was send demo tapes into the ether, or hope they had a friend of an uncle of a friend, or pray for some serendipitous occurrence that would grant them an audience with a major record label. In the meantime, they could paper local record stores and windshields with hand-made promotional fliers.

In the last year or so, the scenario has changed dramatically. There's a new way for unsigned bands to promote themselves, to open doors, on a global level:

the Internet.

"It's clearly the ultimate marketing tool for independent bands," says Tampa-based Ed Aborn, who, under the company name InterSonic, creates Web sites for rock groups. "If you promote and update your site properly, it can pay substantial dividends—not necessarily in terms of hard income at this point, but certainly in terms of raising awareness about the band and making moves that will pay off in the future."

Unsigned acts from Miami to Montana are using the 'net to vastly expand their outreach. A band in Tempe can recruit a fan in Providence, or Guam; it can gain radio airplay in New Zealand or among the multitude of independent college radio stations around the United States; it can land a review in a Filipino music magazine or in the scores of fanzines on the Internet. Clearing-house Web sites like the Internet Underground Music Archive (IUMA) or Music World 3 (MW3) are experiencing rapid growth. IUMA has more than 800 bands that have paid fees to set up Web sites in an archive that generates some 300,000 hits per day.



THE UNDERGROUND MUSIC ARCHIVES BOASTS 300,000 HITS A WEEK

With the right strategy, acts can effectively go it completely alone on the 'net. After a year online, Florida guitarist Todd Grubbs—whose site was set up by Aborn, and is extensively linked and indexed—gets 7,000-10,000 hits a month.

But hits, although nice, are like bragging rights. They do not yield a tangible return. Because the 'net is in its relative mainstream infancy, there is considerable speculation about what long-term effect it will have on indie acts and the music business in general. The best-case scenario for unsigned bands, many of whom have been blithely overlooked by record labels, is that the 'net will allow them to bypass the conventional music industry's powerful infrastructure of distribution and promotion. The overall consensus is that such a monumental shift is not likely to happen any time soon, if ever. Others, however, disagree. San Jose, Calif.-based Tim Alexander, a self-described revolutionary, is leader of the band A Western Front, which he says was the first act to put an entire album on the Internet, making it free to anyone who cared to download it. "The 'net is where the revolution is going to happen in the arts," he declares. "It would be great if we could create a whole new industry apart from those fat guys (in the record business) that we all hate."

Michael Goldberg, founder of *Addicted to Noise*, a fast-growing Internet music magazine, thinks a major breakthrough will occur within the next half-decade. "A band, like Fugazi for instance, is going to sell a million copies of an album relying on the Internet and not the major label system," he says, speaking of a long-respected punk band that has never emerged from the underground. "It's absolutely going to happen. At this point, a small signed band might see a dollar per CD that's sold at retail for like 15 bucks. What is going to happen when that band can get

people to download a whole album for $3 and keep the whole $3?"

For now, scoring a million-seller is a distant dream to indie bands on the 'net. Most acts see being online as a way to create a buzz about their group, build a track record that they can then pitch to labels. The Boston-based industrial-rock band This Is Not Here has been turned down by a slew of record companies. Member Richard Marr says the band plans to re-submit promo kits to the same labels in the near future.

Why? Because, according to Marr, the band has landed radio airplay in 25 states and 10 foreign countries and scored glowing reviews in small 'zines around the world all by using the Web. The band now has a new story to tell. "The Internet has taken us from local awareness to getting us on some major good shows and exposure," Marr says. "We plan on being one of the first bands to truly get signed from being on the Internet."

Thus far, there is no firm evidence that a band has scored a substantial recording contract after being discovered on the 'net. A pivotal question: Do A&R people use the 'net to scout talent? Most Internet devotees maintain that browsing for bands online would be a time- and cost-efficient way for A&R folk to find the next Pearl Jam, yet they do not feel that much research of this nature is taking place as yet. "I use it to cruise for info," says Tom Sarig, director of A&R for the prominent indie label, TVT. "It's a way to be in places you can't be. I'll go through IUMA and look at new band folders.

pitchfork billy bowen

"Online, you can find news on bands that you never heard of. I have not, however, downloaded any (song) samples as yet. Then again, I'm due to get a new computer soon."

Already, there's considerable competition among bands vying for attention on the 'net, and it's only going to get tougher as more and more acts sign on. How does an act stand out among the crowd? First, it must create an attractive site with punchy graphics, photos, plenty of information, order forms for recordings and merchandise, and other components—all set up with extensive, user-friendly cross-linking that will push a user deeper and deeper into the site. A formidable site must also contain sound samples that users can download, which is part of what IUMA's sales and marketing director Todd Williams calls, "the try it and buy it" principle. At this point, downloading a sound sample can tax your patience. Depending on the sampling rate and resulting sound quality, a 30-second clip can take between three and 40 minutes to download. Users are looking forward to the proliferation of new technology that will allow for "real-time audio," where the transfer takes place

instantaneously.

Bands must take an active approach when using the 'net. An artist cannot just contact IUMA or MW3, set up a site and forget about it. Although the archive spurs a lot of traffic, few of the bands have recognizable names and, as such, the browsing process can be random. The Web site must be thought of as a point of destination, experts say, a place where you can direct interested 'net cruisers.

ADAM BOMB GETS HIS MESSAGE OUT THROUGH THE 'NET

"I can't sit back and expect people to come to my site," says Adam Bomb, an L.A-based hip-hop artist. "I have to work the 'net constantly, e-mailing everyone that might be interested in what I do, at radio and press, working the hip-hop news groups, and all the time directing everyone to my Web site."

Artists must also procure a presence on major listing services and search engines such as Yahoo, World Wide Web Worm, Web Crawler and others. Bands who most effectively use the Internet are like detectives following leads in cyberspace. They aggressively make contacts with radio, press and label people via e-mail. The monitor and post messages in news groups that pertain to their style of music. They make contacts and turn them into more contacts. They treat the individual fan, the one who takes time to e-mail feedback, like gold.

Such an approach can, of course, be quite time-consuming. Marr of This Is Not Here, an admitted "'net hog," says he spends up to 80 hours a month online. Mikey Boudet of Miami-based alternative rockers Lounge Act, is on two to three hours a day. Besides recently sending out his Web site URL to "every e-mail address I had," he also printed 2,500 postcards with the band's name, logo and Web site address to send to every industry name he could find. "The beauty of working the 'net for an indie band is that, from the standpoint of a time-to-money ratio, a band can choose to go heavy on the time and keep the money output down," Aborn says. "Yes, you can put in the money and have other people do it for you, but most bands don't have that luxury, so they can put in the time and do it themselves."

Of course, there's nothing like a knockout punch. It's always the truly original idea that will log the most promotional mileage. The band Sky Cries Mary, for instance, is acknowledged as having presented the first real-time compuer-downloaded concert in the fall of 1994. That only the most sophisticated equipment at colleges and corporations could receive the transmission was of little consequence. When the Rolling Stones did their own real-time concert a month or so later, the press coverage cited A Sky Cries Mary as having been the predecessor. With one bold move, the band had made its name recognizeable on a much broader level.

Internet Underground

A BAND WITH A NAME HARDER TO PRONOUNCE THAN PRINCE'S NEW ONE GOES ONLINE

Such masterstrokes are few and far between, though, so in the meantime rank-and-file unsigned bands keep plugging away. And even if the 'net has not yet become a vehicle to generate sales—Grubbs, for instance, says he has sold about 250 CDs online—they see benefits aplenty. Christopher Henry of Cool Toyz can keep his band connected to the world through the Internet while continuing to live in picturesque Montana ski country. He no longer wants anything to do with the major label maelstrom. "When I get a call from a label, I tell them, 'Thanks for your interest, but we're not fielding offers from labels right now,'" he says with a chuckle. "It's the same thing I used to hear from labels all the time. It gives me distinct pleasure to be able to say that to them."

THE WEB GIVES LOCAL BANDS A GLOBAL AUDIENCE

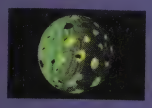
Tampa's Grubbs sees the 'net as having the potential to instill more artistic integrity in music. "I look forward to the time when you can efficiently transfer full albums and get credit to your account," he says. "If I could sell 50,000 albums via the 'net worldwide, I'd be killin'. But to a label it's a major loss. When you can sell directly online, you won't have to constantly worry about whether something is completely commercial, or whether that label will be into it. I think it can restore some of the creative excitement in music."

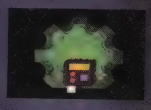
Exotic Pet, a heavy alternative band from Long Branch, N.J., has found independent distributors for its CD by communicating through the Internet. But the band's guitarist, Mitch Wilson, has found that being online can provide a less tangible, but more valuable, benefit. Through a tie-in with the Jersey Area Music Scene site, the band held a contest that offered a free compact disc to anyone in the world that would send the band an interesting or provocative postcard. Exotic Pet received less than 50 responses, but Wilson was anything but discouraged.

"Hey, we got postcards from people around the world," he says. "When you're in a band and things are stagnant and you get down in the dumps, getting some response from people around the world, getting an actual postcard from Latvia, that can be a powerful motivational force. It makes you remember that this is worth doing."

—Eric Snider, a Florida-based freelancer, is a former music critic for the St. Petersburg Times.

USE YOUR BRAIN... OR LOSE YOUR MIND!





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Is live radio the .wav of the future?

Radio (INTER)ACTIVE

STORY BY KATHLEEN FLINN
AND JOHN WESLEY HARDIN
ART BY THOMAS THEWES JR./DER LÄRM

G.J. Goldwyn got fed up with radio and all its inherent commercialism in the '70s, so he quit and "went into computers," as he puts it.

Twenty years later, he's back on the radio—broadcasting on a computer.

"Radio on the 'net is sort of like an underground radio station," Goldwyn says of his station, iRock at http://www.irock.com, one of the first to broadcast original music. "It's like having a pirate setup except that I'm not violating any laws. My philosophy is simple. I make good radio and good music. If geeks or idiots complain about my show, then I forbid them to listen. I don't have to pander."

In 1995, it's hard to believe that 75 years ago radio had much of the same hype and mystique surrounding it that the Internet does today. An adventurous few had the technology and huddled around massive, mysterious boxes that somehow emitted voices and music. Not to downplay the impact of radio as an invention, but radio isn't that dynamic as far as technology goes. Other than the advancement of stereo sound in the '60s, the medium hasn't changed much since Marconi invented it in 1907, not to mention that it was quickly abandoned with the advent of television in the late 1940s.

Three years ago, radio via computers would likely seem to many people a foolish notion. Not anymore. With technology allowing for greater quality of sound transmission, more radio stations are using it to expand their programming and market reach worldwide.

The first two U.S. stations to enter into the 'net radio arena were KPIG-FM in Freedom, Calif., at http://www.kpig.com, and WKSU-FM in Kent, Ohio, http://www.wksu.kent.edu when they began offering up-to-date newscasts using RealAudio last spring.

Others have followed, including ABC Radio Network at http://www.radionet.com, National Public Radio at http://www.npr.org/, C-Span at http://www.c-span.org/ along with an arm-long list of other radio stations throughout the world, ranging from Nexus-IBA in Milano, Italy, to KBS in Seoul, South Korea. An excellent directory of radio sites on the 'net can be found at http://town.hall.org/radio/index.html.

Most of the stations use one of two popular sound application software technologies, either RealAudio, StreamWorks or Internet Wave, also known as IWave.

RealAudio was created by Progressive Networks, a Seattle-based start-up headed by a former Microsoft executive. Real-time audio replaced the standard .wav files that required users to download large files to play back sound. That .wav technology did not allow for the "broadcast" of sound via the 'net and the quality for music was limited at best. StreamWorks, by Xing Technologies, is based on the same video delivery technology that Xing has provided to NBC and Reuters for broadcast of financial news programming

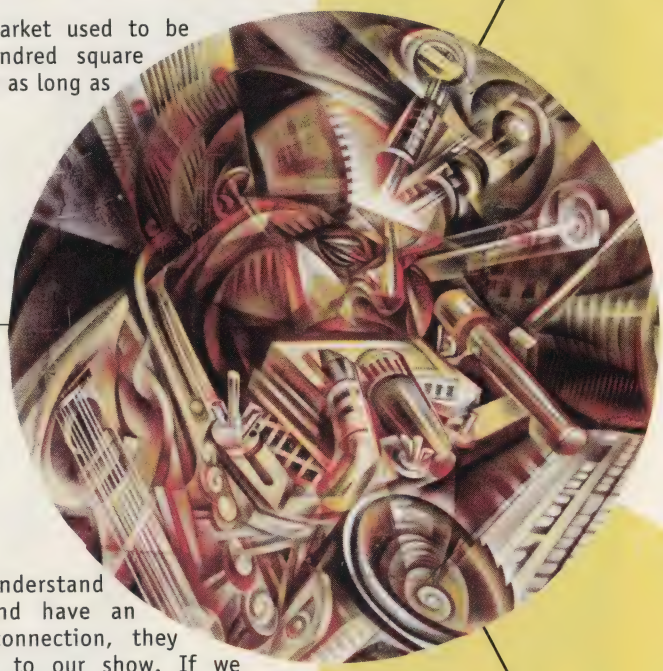
worldwide. Internet Wave, or IWave, was developed by VocalTec, makers of the Internet Phone (see *IU* issue #1 page 20). Use of such software is what allows the conversion of files to sound, automatically.

Internet broadcasting instantly overcomes one of the biggest inherent limitations of radio: range. AM signals can bounce off the ionosphere and travel hundreds, sometimes thousands, of miles, but that's not a reliable way to broadcast, and FM transmissions are line of sight only. Internet broadcast frees radio stations of these physical constraints. Overnight, computers are opening up local radio shows to global markets.

"Our market used to be a few hundred square miles. Now as long as people understand English and have an Internet connection, they can listen to our show. If we could get that across to our sponsors (laughs) we'd be pretty stoked," says John Bates of RadioNet.

RadioNet broadcasts from KSCO AM Santa Cruz, Calif., RadioNet at http://www.radionet.com. During its weekly technology show, the station takes the usual phone calls, but they also solicit user comments through e-mail and IRC comments from the Web, making it more interactive than any radio show ever before. While this is unusual, what takes the show beyond the ken of normal radio broadcast is their use of RealAudio technology to broadcast their show live on the Internet.

"The other advantages to what



RADIO NATION

What's that? You say you want to listen to radio on your computer, but you don't want to listen to a computer radio show? You're in luck, camper.

Radio.Net
(http://www.netradio.net) is the home of Radio.Net, the first live 24-hour-a-day Internet-only radio network on the Web. Users can choose from a variety of musical formats and get up-to-date music news along with hot links to other music-realted site.

Internet Radio Hawaii
(http://www.hotspots.hawaii.com/IRH-Home.html) is an Internet-only radio station in Hawaii. As part of the burgeoning Hawaiian culture resurgence, IRH plays traditional Hawaiian music and has resources for Hawaiians who want to learn more about their own culture.

Carving Knife Records
(http://www.peak.org/~flux/ckr/ckr.html) is a site with real attitude. "This is a punk WWW site. We will use language that some pussy-foots might find offensive. We don't care if this bothers you." In addition to real punk cache, you can go to the listening booth and find downloadable RealAudio files of the punks that these punks love. Don't expect to find a bunch of bands you've heard of; this is the real underground shit.

c|net Radio
(http://www.cnet.com/index.html) is one of the newest RealAudio sites, with hourly news, convention updates, technology stories and more. c|net is already a cool site, and RealAudio drops the temperature by at least five degrees.

Music For RealAudio
(http://www.ibmpcug.co.uk/~irdial/real_b.htm) is a bit misleading. It's an experiment to produce music that is designed purposefully not to survive RealAudio's compression/decompression cycle. When the music is played, each listener hears something different. These people have too much time on their hands.

Nautilus Gallery
(http://www.netpoint.net/~janhuss/main/index.html) is a site to download multimedia art, jokes and short stories by various Florida artists.

Plan 9 From Outer Space
(http://www.w2.com/docs2/c4/plan.html) Yes, you can now listen to the entire original motion-picture soundtrack from the worst film ever made. One hour and 10 minutes of frighteningly bad fright film is enough to satisfy the most psychotronic among us. Oh, yeah, you can also buy the soundtrack here, too, and read a history of the film.

***Find more RealAudio sites at the RealAudio Home Page* (http://www.realaudio.com/raguide.cgi).**

we've done is that we created a radio show with a shelf life," says RadioNet's producer and programmer, Sheila Siden. "In the past a radio show was perishable: the minute the words escaped the radio, it was gone. Now we're able to capture it and put it on the Internet."

Broadcasting on the 'net is the answer to every wanna-be D.J.'s dream. New technology has made it easy to have an instant global audience. But the simplicity is deceiving , warns iRock's Goldwyn.

"True, it's easy. But it's costly. You need a Tq line for a server or you get cramped after a thousand listeners. Then you have to deal with music licensing and attorneys so it basically costs the same to have a regular station," Goldwyn says. "Sure, you could do it with a CD player, but I don't know how many listeners you're going to get or maintain."

Getting listeners on the 'net takes something more than just a regular station. If it's just mindless music surfers are after, they can just turn the traditional dial.

"The Eagles in Seattle sound the same to me as they do in California. When you turn on iRock you know you're not listening to a regular broadcast. That's what it takes. A 'net surfer is like a channel surfer. They click and click and click until they find something they like."

For now, radio on the 'net remains almost a novelty. Eventually, creators of online radio programming hope that it will become part of daily routine, the same way online news organizations hope people will get in the habit of opening a virtual news resource on a regular basis. One of the early entrants is ABC RadioNet. With an easy-to-use graphical interface, RadioNet offers on-the-hour updates, local news for several metropolitan cities, sports and weather forecasts. They even had live simulcast coverage of many major events, including the Papal visit to New York. Eventually, ABC expects to add video into the mix.

"What makes it interesting is there's no handbook to pick up on how to put audio on the Web. There are no answers, which can lead to some difficult moments," says Jeff Herman, producer of the ABC Radio Net site. "I feel like we're kind of inventing this new way of publishing information. Right now, we try to have text lead-in, similar to what an anchor might say to set up the context of a video story. Then you can click on the link you want. The text offers an overview, the audio gives you the details."

Soon, real-time video will begin to infiltrate the 'net and the novelty of audio may fade somewhat. But until then, those involved in 'net radio will bask in the attention.

"It's cool to listen to radio over the 'net," Goldwyn says. "Anyone can listen to the radio. Just think of what kind of instant geek babe magnet you'd be if you tried playing iRock on your laptop through a wireless modem on the beach. You'd have to fight them off."

So what's the Big Deal?

Critics say that AM-quality voice transmission over the Internet is no different from telephoning on the cheap, so what's the big deal? "Well, I'm sorry but there's something fundamentally more powerful going on here," replies RadioNet's John Bates. "RealAudio is a real enabler for us."

What RealAudio and other helper applications like it do is read a file as it comes into your computer. It's similar to downloading any file off the 'net, but the player interprets and plays the audio stream as it is downloaded. Not only does this allow you to hear sound files much faster, but it gives the capability to send live feeds over the Internet.

"All of a sudden we were able to compress our two-hour radio show, about 200 Megs of information, down into two Megs of information, and make it available in real-time download so all people have to do is start this stream. We've got mail from Sweden and Finland and Australia saying "Wow, I really love your show!"

Rob Glaser, RealAudio's founder, is convinced that he is on to something big. Glaser once ran Microsoft's multimedia and consumer systems and was in charge of establishing the standards for multimedia PCs (MPC), so he is no wide-eyed kid. "What we've done is make it practical to deliver live and on-demand audio-based content on a global basis."

Audio is great, but isn't this all going to go away when we have widespread video-conferencing and CU-SeeME? No, says Glaser. "We also have a focus on continually going back to the technical drawing board and improving our product and our system as much as possible." Future enhancements will include better quality audio, higher bit rates, scalable bandwidth and delivering audio-visual information.

According to analyst Marty Levine, editor of the Digital Technology Report, there's no question that the technology will be in widespread use. The question is what happens when that day comes. "Issues involved in transmitting audio over the Internet relate far more to copyright issues than they do to technology." Eventually, Internet bandwidth will allow the transmission of CD-quality audio.

"It's a combination of economics and technology today; tomorrow it's a copyright issue," says Levine. "If you have 100,000 people who will listen to an AM-quality talk show, you may have a million people who would listen to a preview of the next Rolling Stones album."

The upshot is that someone is going to want you to pay for that Rolling Stones concert, and it's very likely that those same someones will not want you to copy that concert and give or sell it to your friends. Levine comments: "Someone might argue 'How many people have the means to record that?' Well, recordable CD is here now, and it's only getting cheaper, and become more readily available."

The RealAudio player is available for downloading at (http://www.realaudio.com/). Minimum system requirements are a 486/33 SX or better PC running Microsoft Windows 3.1x, Windows NT or Windows 95. The Macintosh version requires System 7 or higher on a 25 MHz 68030 processor or better, or a Power Mac with 8 MBytes RAM.

One competing technology exists, and that is Xing Technologies StreamWorks. It supports scalable speeds of transmission from 8.5kbps to 112kbps and live video. In the current version at ISDN rates (112kbps - 128kbps), it can receive 30fps full-motion video with monaural sound at approximately quarter-screen resolution. It's available at (http://www.xingtech.com/), in Windows, Macintosh and Unix versions.

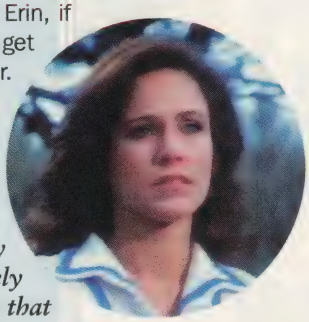
Who: Karen Allen
Site: http://www.fn.net/~spreng/karen_a/ka_news.htm
Irony Factor: There is no Kate Capshaw site.
Most Famous For: Playing Indy's love interest, Marion Ravenwood, in *Raiders of the Lost Ark.*
Little Known Fact: In the early '70s she drove from Mexico to Peru with friends who were filming a documentary about South American Indians.
Site Highlight: Questions I Would Ask Karen Allen If I Got the Chance (example: "Do you still have problems with your vision?")

As if anyone questioned Karen Allen's downward career path, the actress has gone from starring in Animal House *with John Belushi to starring in a CD-ROM with Jimmie Walker. This site is actually quite good, with meticulously detailed pages, dozens of photos, and lots of links, but all this work for the star of* Ghost in the Machine? *Well, at least Karen probably appreciates the adoration, right? A direct quote after the author gives her address: "Note that, while I have sent her several fan letters over the past five years, I have never received any response. Let me know if you do!"*

The Karen Allen Page

THE OFFICIAL CHRISTIAN BALE HOME PAGE

Who: Erin Gray
Site: http://marg.ntu.ac.uk/marg/andy/gray.html
Irony Factor: She has a site; Gil Gerard doesn't.
Most Famous For: A toss-up between her star turns in *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* and *Silver Spoons.*
Little Known Fact: She was once a spokesmodel for English Leather.
Site Highlight: Seemingly it would be the 30+ pictures of Erin, if I could get them to load faster.



By listing Erin's complete film/TV listings you can trace her career from Buck Rogers *to* Jason Goes to Hell: The Final Friday. *Gray was a model, so the site likely includes hot GIFs. It seems that Gray merits a home page for starring in* Buck Rogers, *putting her into the cyberbabe arena along with Gillian Anderson, Teri Hatcher and every woman who's ever been on* Star Trek.

STARS! STARS! STARS?

Who: Abraham Benrubi
Site: http://www.halcyon.com/tedlewis/benrubi.html
Irony Factor: The clearest photo at the site is to the left.
Most Famous For: His current role as Jerry in NBC's *ER.*
Little Known Fact: Benrubi's middle name is Hercules.
Site Highlight: Those pictures of Benrubi being drawn and quartered in *Wagons East* (at left).

Granted ER *is the most popular TV show in the known universe at the moment, but a home page for Benrubi? I mean, I can understand home pages for George Clooney or Noah Wyle, but Benrubi? To each his own.*

FROM HERE TO OBSCURITY

BY ALEX GORDON

A MAP TO THE HOLLYWOOD "STARS" HOME PAGES

Welcome to our tour! Remember, hands and feet inside the tram at all times. Please, no flash photography.

Before we begin our journey to home pages of the obscure stars, I'll offer a brief introduction to the tour. You see, ladies and gentlemen, if you look around you'll find the Web littered with shrines to stars and celebrities of all ilk. While the number of Alicia Silverstone pages might be overwhelming, if you consider the Web's demographics, it's understandable. But somewhere among the sites for Winona Ryder and James Dean, you come across a home page for a star that just makes you scratch your head, and mutter, "Why?" For instance, why would someone devote a space on the bandwidth to Karen Allen? "I had been a big fan of hers for many, many years, collecting photos, interviews, videos etc. The Web simply provided me with a good way to 'display' my collection," explains Patrick Spreng the designer of the Allen page. It makes sense when you consider people post the contents of their fridge online. While most of the sites we'll visit on our tour are loving tributes to overlooked actors, some have higher purposes. Harrison Cheung, the creator of the Christian Bale site, actually corresponds with Bale monthly. Cheung thinks his site will eventually boost Bale's career: "His audience is young and very computer literate. Given that (Bale) doesn't get much traditional publicity, the home page functions as a resource for fans, the press and casting agents." Well, you didn't pay to hear me talk all day. Let's get on with our tour. I believe our first home page is coming up on the left. Once again, let me remind you—no flash photography.

Who: Christian Bale
Site: http://www.asgo.net/~cbale/bale.htm
Irony Factor: Watch his changing hair over the years.
Most Famous For: His starring role in Steven Spielberg's *Empire of the Sun.*
Little Known Fact: "Christian will not eat anything sentient."
Site Highlight: The Christian FAQ.

Christian is a well-respected young actor and all that, but he's still a mite obscure to merit a fan home page. With his next two projects being adaptations of literary classics by James and Conrad, Christian's home page is probably the most mainstream exposure he can expect to get.

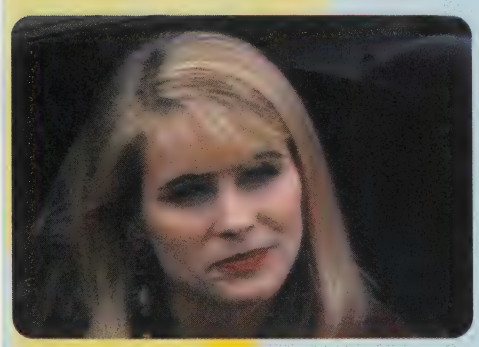
Who: Roddy McDowall
Site: http://www.fentonnet.com/smithway/roddy.html
Irony Factor: Rodney Dangerfield's site blows this away (See *IU* #1, page 67).
Most Famous For: Cornelius from *Planet of the Apes.*
Little Known Fact: Roddy has co-starred with a dog, cat and horse.
Site Highlight: The *Lord Love a Duck* wallpaper.

The site, though mostly under construction, still offers a wide variety of pictures of Roddy (though sadly none in his chimpanzee makeup).

Who: Kristy McNichol
Site: http://coos.dartmouth.edu/~elnitsky/Kristy.html ***and*** http://www.magicnet.net/~grushka/Kristy/index.html
Irony Factor: There's not an *Empty Nest* site.
Most Famous For: Letitia "Buddy" Lawrence on *Family.*
Little Known Fact: In a 1982 *Teen Bag* interview Kristy said the most memorable country she's ever visited was Hawaii.
Site Highlight: The aforementioned interview transcript.

Not just one, but two sites for every mid-'70s adolescents' dream date. Apparently Kristy has suffered from personal problems over the last couple of years, yet both pages' authors seem to know very little about her current status other than the fact she did appear on the finale of Empty Nest. *If you have any Kristy info please pass it on to her die-hard fans.*

Who: Ami Dolenz
Site: http://www.cdc.net/~mwade/ami_dolenz.html
Irony Factor: None, but her name spans the alphabet

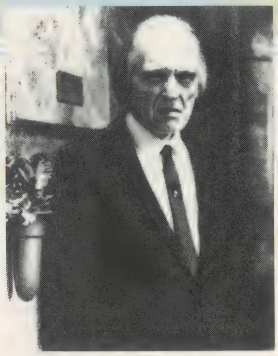


Most Famous For: Being Mickey Dolenz's daughter
Little Known Fact: Everything about her is "little known"
Site Highlight: The author actually has a TV Guide to her appearances, mostly late at night on cable TV each month.

Obscure is a compliment to the star of **Pumpkinhead II: Blood Wings** *(also starring Soleil Moon Frye!),* **White Wolves: A Cry in the Wild II** *(also starring Mark Paul Gosselaar!) and* **Witchboard II: The Devil's Doorway** *(also starring Laraine Newman!). The Point ranked this site in the top 5 percent of the Web. Personally, this makes me question my faith in their judgment.*

Who: Angus Scrimm
Site: http://www.phantasm.com/hpages/SCRIMM_bio.html
Irony Factor: His name alone is scary.
Most Famous For: Playing the Tall Man in the *Phantasm* trilogy.
Little Known Fact: He has "written liner notes for thousands of LPs and CDs for everyone from Frank Sinatra and The Beatles to Arthur Rubinstein and Itzhak Perlman."
Site Highlight: The exclusive quotes from Scrimm such as his response to the possibility of a fourth *Phantasm*: "Tell them, I haven't hung up the old balls yet!"

He may or may not be obscure to horror-film buffs, but we have to admit we were hard pressed to recall the **Phantasm** *films, much less old Angus himself. Maybe because of this, the site lists some of his other film roles such as the memorable* **Dr. Sin Do** *and* **Vlad the Vampire King.**

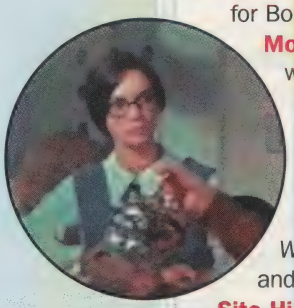


Who: Farrah Forke
Site: http://www.grfn.org/~kent/farrah.html
Irony Factor: Like her series, her site has been canceled.
Most Famous For: Two seasons on *Wings*.

Little Known Fact: Her last name is pronounced "For-key."
Site Highlight: The honest and forthright manner in which the site deals with the cancellation of Farrah's latest sitcom, *Dweebs*.

Adoration for a B-level, albeit an attractive B-level, sitcom star. Whatever.

Who: Pamela Franklin
Site: http://www.geopages.com/Hollywood/2125/
Irony Factor: People might find it looking for Bonnie, star of *One Day At A Time*.



Most Famous For: Let's put it this way: If you can place her name with a role, you win.
Little Known Fact: Of her first eight roles, five had animals in the titles: *Eagle in a Cage*, *Flipper and the Pirates*, *A Tiger Walks*, *The Horse Without a Head* and *The Lion*.
Site Highlight: The page dedicated to her beloved film, *The Legend of Hell House*, in which she stars with another animal lover, Roddy McDowall (see his stop earlier on the tour).

If you opened up the dictionary and looked under obscure, you probably wouldn't find Pamela's picture, but that's less a testament to her obscurity and more to the fact dictionaries, despite the popular cliché, usually only have pictures for words that are nouns, not adjectives.

That concludes our tour of the home pages of the obscure stars. I hope you enjoyed your visit. Exit to the right and have a good day!

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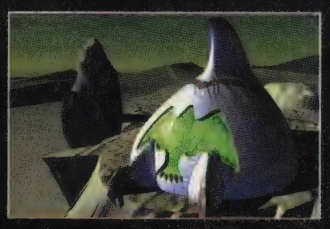
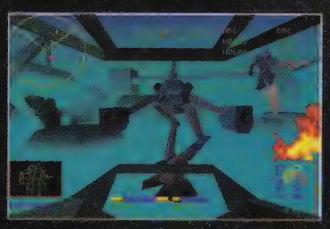
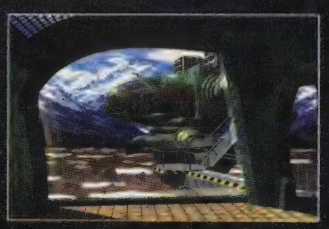
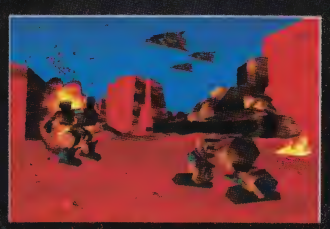

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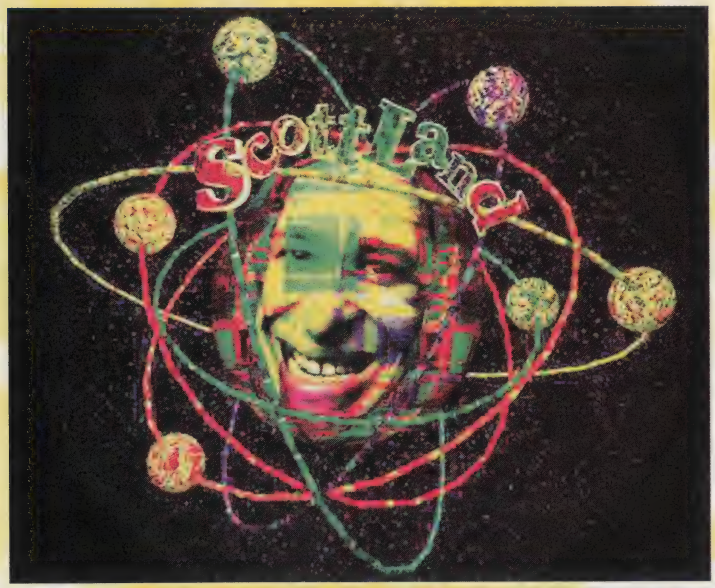
by Justin Ware

ON the net with...

SCOTT Thompson

It should come as no surprise that Scott Thompson's Scottland has a sensibility vastly different from other celebrity Web sites. The comedian's endeavors, from small clubs in Canada to his forays into television, always seem to skate the cutting edge. A member of the sketch-comedy team The Kids in the Hall, Thompson now appears regularly on another one of Hollywood's *recent experiments in high-quality comedy,* The Larry Sanders Show *on HBO. With the release of* The Kids in the Hall *movie next spring, Thompson's a busy guy, especially to keep up with a demanding Web site.* IU *caught up with Thompson in Los Angeles to discuss his recent venture into cyberspace.*



HE COMES IN ALL COLORS: SCOTT THOMPSON'S WEB SITE WELCOMES VISITORS INTO HIS OWN PERSONAL ORBIT

Internet Underground: How did you get involved with the Internet and Scottland?

Scott Thompson: Basically, when we wrapped our show a year ago, I wanted to do something really exciting again, something that was new. My brother was an engineer working for Hydro. He wanted to quit his job and do something for himself, so he decided to start his own company building Web sites. He asked if he could start with me. I'm not really very computer literate—my computer is mostly used as a writing tool—but my brother's a bit of a computer geek. I thought that this would be perfect, to do this together. So he formed this company with my cousin and it became this kind of family business, like a little mom-and-pop shop.

IU: What's been your reaction to the experience so far?

ST: What I like about it is that it's really raw. It's like going back to the clubs. We don't really know what we're doing, we don't make any money and only a very few people get to see what we're doing. I mean, *The Kids in the Hall* never became a huge, screaming mainstream phenomenon, but it was big enough. This is like starting over.

IU: Have you gotten much of a response to Scottland?

ST: We have, but it's difficult because of the nature of the Web. Unless you keep giving people new things, they go away and it's hard to bring them back. But we've had over 70,000 visitors and 3,500 people that have

Not a kid, no longer in the hall, he's now running his own country and might declare war. Sort of.

signed up as citizens of Scottland. Those people will be the ones who, through their e-mail and through me talking to them in chat lines, will help me build the site. I've been very lucky that I have some celebrity, which is perfect, since I can actually use that to advertise my site. So yeah, we've had tons of e-mail and people are very excited by it. It's just that for me personally, I haven't been able to be totally on top of it. I'm right here in L.A. now, and I'm not going to be home (in Toronto) for a couple more weeks. When I go back, I'm going to spend a couple of months working on it. But when you're just a private citizen, it's hard to have the right lines. That's what I find very difficult. I don't want to charge people. I don't want to have advertising. But at the same time it's a very expensive proposition and I'm losing money out of every pore. It's a creative thing and it's a place for me to write. I'm writing stuff for my characters, but it's becoming an unbelievably expensive hobby.

IU: So have you figured out any options on that front?

ST: Well, I've designed some T-shirts and I'm putting together some videos, kind of like bootlegs of old performances. I have a compilation video of 18 monologues from 1984 on, down in the clubs, and I'm selling that for like $20, although it's not moving. They're like things you'd see in fanzines or in the back of *Rolling Stone*, stuff like that. Bootlegs that I'm controlling. And that's one idea, but it's difficult because people get really put off by things being sold on the site. It's like public television.

IU: What do you think the advantages are of the Web, as a performer and as a writer?

ST: Well, one of the advantages is that no one tells me what to do. There's no middle man. If I want to write a monologue or write a piece and then just put it onto my site for people to download, they get it. I think one of the advantages is that there's no censorship in my site, I can say whatever the fuck I want. I can kind of create a dialogue between characters that I've never really been able to. And one of the things that I've done on the site is an election we have going on...

IU: I saw that. I've spent some time on the site, and I'm actually registered as a citizen, so...

ST: Oh, you are! Did you listen to the debate? Because that's the coolest thing that we've done so far. I wrote this debate between the four characters that was 21 minutes long—basically like a half-hour show—and CBC radio let us use their technology for people to download it in real time. We recorded it on a DAT machine in my brother's house. I did all the characters with my friend Alain playing the moderator. But only 200 to 300 people have actually heard it, so it's sort of like I've done the show in a little club. Which is kind of exciting, I like that. But I don't know where it's going to go. What I want is someone to sponsor me, like an interactive company, or DreamWorks, or Maverick. Just to (have them) sponsor it as an experiment in entertainment

IU: Why did you decide to do it in this style? Why create this world, with citizens, and the whole Scottland motif?

ST: I don't know. Maybe I'm just a megalomaniac. Maybe I'm a Jim Jones in the making. It is sort of like a cult, in a way, isn't it... I guess it appeals to the science-fiction nut in me. It's like being in a little spaceship broadcasting to a few people. There wasn't any real planning that way—it just came naturally. We just had brainstorming ideas and sessions, coming up with ideas and then just going with it. The whole running for prime minister thing was just an idea to have a running soap opera. I like the idea of an ongoing story that people can help move along through audience participation. Like in the debate that I did, a lot of the questions that I asked of the characters were questions that people actually asked me through e-mail.

IU: Do you think it's hard to be funny on the Web, as opposed to performing live or doing a TV show where you're allowed to be a lot more interactive? Is it kind of odd to you that you don't get direct feedback?

ST: Yes, it is. It's very hard. That's what I find most difficult. (laughs) I find a lot of things most difficult. Next thing I'll say is, "What I find most difficult is that I can't wear big hats." Yeah, it is hard. The feedback comes slowly, like days later I'll read that someone liked something, but it's not immediate. Television's not immediate either, but it's a lot more so than this. My hope is that things will just get better and better, faster and faster. The one thing I'm really interested in is the CUSeeMe technology because eventually I'd like to do a little show from my house. I know that very few people will have that technology, but my hope is it'll be kind of like a cult thing. I guess it's just the idea of starting small again. I just hope that it doesn't become advertiser driven, the way television has. Although my experience (on the Web) so far gives me an understanding of why television went that way. Before I would just hate it, without understanding, but now I understand why that happened.

IU: Do you think that's where the Internet's heading?

ST: I don't know. What do you think?

IU: I think that people would prefer to have advertisers on sites than have to pay to get into them. I think that most people on the Internet really resist subscribing to sites.

ST: I agree. That's one of the ideas that we were talking about, but I don't want to do it. I don't want to have a toll.

Thompson: What I'd then like to do is declare war on a site and see what that's like.

***IU:* On just another, random site?**

Thompson: Yeah.

IU: You also use a lot of fairly cutting-edge technology.

ST: Yeah. You know, I've got a few savings, but this is eating into it at a very fast rate. That's scaring me. I feel very out of control and I kind of like that. I like that feeling of not knowing what I'm doing or not knowing where it's headed. And I don't want to abandon it, because I know that it's going to lead to something really exciting.

IU: So what about other people that you work with or know in the entertainment industry... do they understand what you're doing?

ST: Not really. Most people don't quite get it. Some do, and they're very thrilled by it. But I think a lot of people in the entertainment industry also are very threatened by it. Like one of the ideas that I had, which I would like to do like next year, is go to the Emmy Awards with my powerbook and a CUSeeMe camera to do like a really underground, subversive report on my own, through my site. But that's very threatening to the powers-that-be. They have billions of dollars invested in their world and the whole Web threatens to topple it all. Part of me likes that idea. Some things do need to come down, and maybe that'll force people in television and entertainment to sort of wake up.

IU: Have you gotten a chance to spend much time on the rest of the Web?

THE SCOTTLAND POST OFFICE (ABOVE LEFT); THOMPSON AS THE QUEEN; AND ON *THE LARRY SANDERS SHOW* (OPPOSITE)

ST: I haven't done much cruising, no. My brother does that a lot, but I'm really not that computer literate. I just know that this is a different way for me to perform. You know, that thing that we did with the debate (321 Face-Off Decision 95) was in many ways just a radio play. In that way, it's strange, because it's so futuris-

tic, but at the same time, that's very low-tech. It was like I went back to the '50s. It was just a radio play that people could listen to on their computer, except that there were no regulations, no regulatory bodies, no one telling me that I couldn't say 'fuck.' Hopefully that will last. Especially compared to American television—the standards on American television are very... well, they're stupid. It's Puritanical. I hope the Web doesn't fall prey to that.

IU: What do you think about efforts to regulate it because of the big Cyberporn debate?

ST: I think that's just hysteria. Don't you?

IU: I think it's an overreaction, but it is there.

ST: Sure it's there. But it's everywhere. I guess, basically, I don't want that to happen because I'm going to be making porn available on my site very soon.

IU: Anything in the future on the site that we should know about? Any other plans?

ST: Well, we're going to elect a prime minister, but then I don't know what's going to happen except that people should be prepared for war. I think that might be the first order of business. It all depends on who's elected. I have a feeling who's going to win. What I'd then like to do is declare war on a site and see what that's like.

IU: On just another, random site?

ST: Yeah.

IU: Well, I could definitely give you some suggestions for sites.

ST: You could? No, you don't want to be responsible for that. ○

NATIONALIST LAMPOONS

http://www.scottland.com

Most celebrity sites are little more than vertical fanzines, a couple of glossy photos slapped onto a funky Netscape-enhanced background with a few quotes betraying a severe lack of understanding about the Web. Scott Thompson's Scottland, however, is a welcome exception. Though Thompson professes a distinct amount of 'net naivete, he's teamed up with people who know what they're doing (primarily, it seems, his brother Craig) and the result is a Web site that's actually in-depth and funny.

Scottland, as one might expect, is a new country existing only in cyberspace, though much of the energy of the site stems from a kind of frantic small-town mentality. The post office serves as the hub of activity, though Bottoms Up, a sort of café central, is gaining fast with improvisational games, a Scottland newspaper and a chat table. Scottland actually tries to make the site both interactive and funny, which is no easy task, though Scottland's entire style helps. Rather than uploading a few random jokes, Scottland creates an entire separate universe with a distinct personality and tone, allowing visitors to fall into step with Thompson's sense of humor through video clips and tongue-in-cheek introductions to each of the pages.

The most successful endeavor undertaken so far on Scottland is the election of prime minister, which finished last month. One candidate from each of Scottland's four major parties (the Martini Party, the Widows Party, the Moustachioni Party and the Martyr Party) ran for the position, with each one played by Scott. Downloadable on RealAudio, the candidate debate covered topics ranging from fashion to cannibalism to family values, and it had some great lines. Take, for example, Widows Party leader Francesca Fiori's diatribe on how to speed up construction at Scottland: "Slave labour, obviously. It's the only way. It's what Imelda did when she had to have the big auditorium for the Miss Universe pageant before. I admire Imelda and Evita and all the great widows who use their power and their anger against the world for good. ScottLand is like the Pyramids. It cannot be stopped. If some people must die, so it will be." Obviously, this is not the kind of discourse you hear on *Frontline*. The debate had the kind of random, what-the-hell feel to it that is absent from most mass-produced entertainment; some of it worked and some of it didn't, but it was all so raw and energetic that I couldn't help but be entertained. Scottland is really trying to do something new, and even if it's not all fluid, that's part of its appeal. It takes a distinct angle, aims for the jugular, and comes up with some great material well worth checking out.

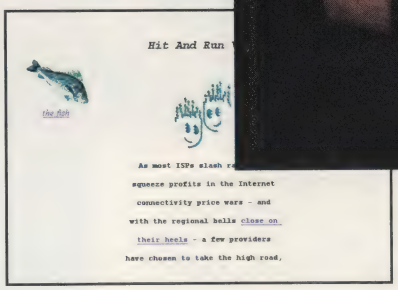
—J.W.

suck: A FISH A BARREL AND A SMOKING GUN

Joey Anuff and Carl Steadman refer to their e-zine *Suck* as an experiment in provocation, mordant deconstructionism and buzz-saw journalism.

"The original concept was to do something like *Mad* magazine, which sounds weird since it's nothing like *Mad*. But the idea at first was to do parodies. It's not that we wouldn't do that, we just don't have the time to do full-blown parodies," explains Anuff. Instead, the pair now launches humorous barbs at popular sites and analyzes trends affecting the 'net with the voice of insiders and the wit of college pranksters.

Steadman was among the first people to set up a Web site back in 1993 while Anuff worked developing multimedia in the Bay area after graduating from Cal.-Berkeley with a degree in rhetoric. Seeing that a lot of dreck was entering the ether, the two waited for someone to point this aspect out; in effect to police the Web somewhat, yet no one did. So they created *Suck*. Their theme, "A fish, a barrel and a smoking gun" refers to how easy it is to find victims, err, subjects, about which to write.



(ABOVE) SCENES FROM THE SUCK SITE; (RIGHT) ANUFF AND STEADMAN, CREATING BARRELS O' WITTY COMMENTARY.

"It seemed unfair to take a negative stance on the Web but it also seemed sort of healthy," Anuff says. What he and Steadman hate most are sites that blatantly keep hyping the Web. "Imagine a TV show talking about the miracle of TV. Hours of hours of programming talking about how great TV is. All I want is for them to get to the point."

Steadman and Anuff, both 24, work in a cramped back office in production at *HotWired*, across the hall from the print staff of *Wired*. Anuff says the pair literally hid a Pentium in the closet so that they could take advantage of *HotWired*'s T1 line. They kept such a low profile, few of their co-workers knew of their deeds.

"For a month or so, they didn't know we were doing this," Anuff says. "Yet, something like 70 percent of the office was reading it. Maybe 10 percent knew we were the ones doing it."

Now, the whole operation has literally come out of the closet. *Hotwired* even started sponsoring the venture in late November; an odd turn of events for two guys who complaining about the commercialization of the Web.

The 'zine covers so many topics, it's difficult to define their focus exactly. Every weekday, they post a new story. One day, they might skewer the keepers of (fill in the blank) site of the day, while the next might bring an essay on how Spam has infiltrated the 'net as a cultural icon, complete with a "Spam-O-Matic" that allows users to send famous spam messages such as "Make Money Fast" with the return address reading "SteveCase@aol.com."

Much of their writing reflects their positions as self-appointed watchdogs, charged with pointing out the shameless hucksterism on the Web. Unfortunately, commercialization seems to be occurring more and more often, fueling the *Suck* engine and making the creators wary. Though Steadman believes the Web still holds a lot of promise, and he hopes it will be realized, he says he doesn't expect it.

"The worst case scenario?" asks the *Suck* creator. "The Web will just become like TV."

A closer look at this month's #1 site

SPOTLIGHT

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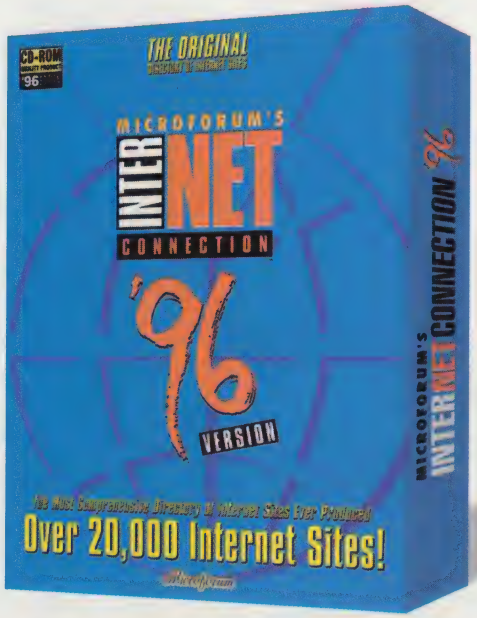

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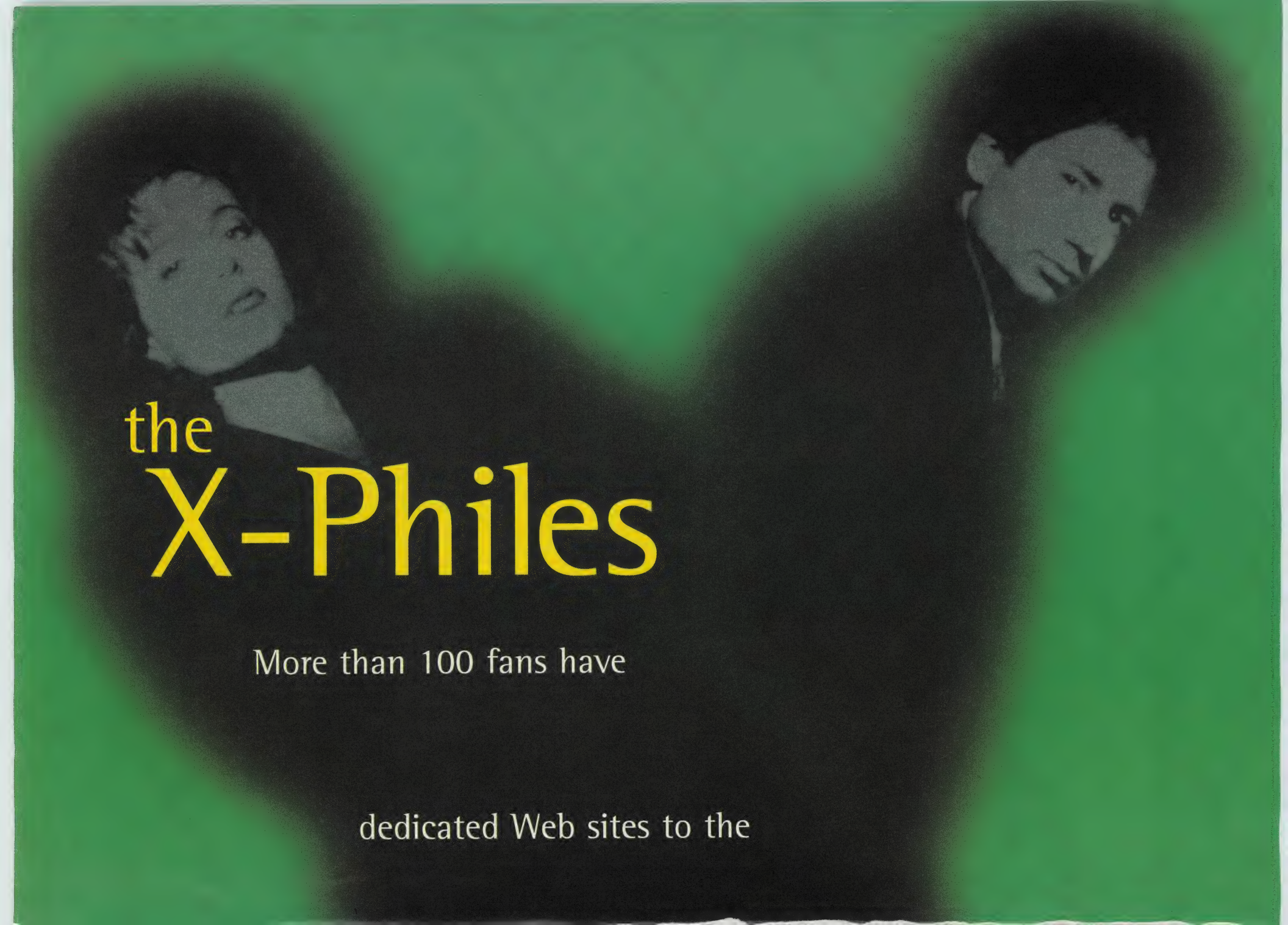


the X-Philes

More than 100 fans have

dedicated Web sites to the

show in an odd, worldwide

phenomenon worthy of its own

X-file. The Bureau of *IU*

decided to investigate.

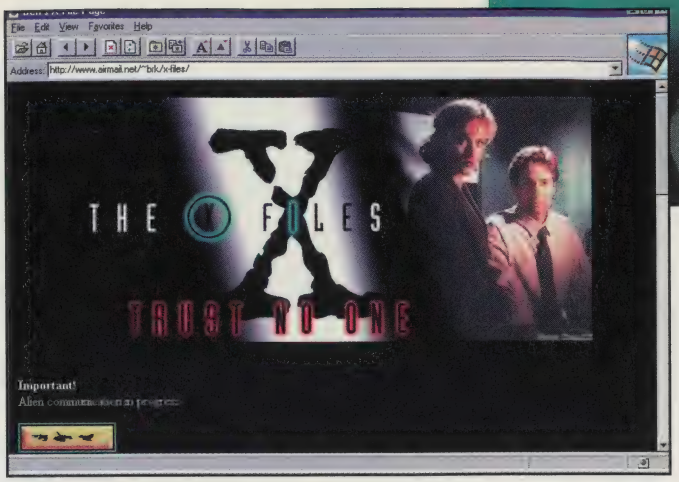
Files

An *IU* exclusive!
See if you can determine which of the Scully and Mulder quotes scattered throughout this story are authentic!

Washington, D.C.

Agent FOX MULDER walks into his darkened office at the FBI headquarters. It's cold, snowy. He shakes off his jacket. As he turns from the coat peg, he jumps back, startled. A cool DANA SCULLY swivels around in her chair to reveal a bright computer screen at the desk.

SCULLY: Mulder, I'm glad you're here. I have discovered something I think you should look at.
MULDER: Scully, you scared me almost as much as that time I thought people were starting to believe me.
SCULLY: I apologize. I didn't want anyone to know what I was looking for in here.
MULDER: Were you expecting anyone than me?
SCULLY: Mulder, even you may not be who you are. Really, come here and look what I've found.
(Both lean toward the computer, their faces bright with the reflection of the screen. MULDER shakes his head in disbelief.)
MULDER: This is strange, even I don't believe it.
SCULLY: Mulder, do I detect a hint of skepticism? Actually, neither would I, but I've checked the data twice. It's come out conclusive each time. (She hands him a clipboard) I think we're dealing with something resembling a cult.
MULDER: (Checking it over then standing up) Or maybe it's part of a cover-up by the bureau.
SCULLY: (Shaking her head) Well, at least you don't think it involves aliens this time.



Trust No One's Links

Perhaps it has become the oddest of trends. Web sites dedicated to television shows seems almost cyclical in the evolutionary pattern of technology. *Internet Underground* has found roughly 100 sites dedicated to the show in some way. One of the first was the comprehensive official site maintained on Delphi in close association with the show's creator, Chris Carter. (Delphi and Fox are owned by the same parent company, Rubert Murdoch's mammoth NewsCorp.) That

The X-Files Drinking Game

http://www.ksu.edu/~madmat/xfiles.html

Take one drink every time one of the following events occurs. Expect at least one of the following every episode.

1. Whenever Mulder is called "Spooky Mulder."
2. Every time a reference is made to Mulder's obsession with porn.
3. Whenever Mulder is called "Fox."
4. Every time Cancer Man lights a cigarette.
5. If they ever drive a car other than a Ford Taurus.
6. Every time Deep Throat or Mr. X is called. (Or when Mulder meets with one of them on a foggy, dark night.)
7. Every time Mulder mentions his sister's abduction.
8. Every time Scully is seen examining internal organs of some corpse.
9. Whenever Mulder runs off and leaves Scully to get attacked just so he can save the day.
10. If Mulder or Scully is in a dark scary place and one of them drops or loses a flashlight.

site at http://www.delphi.com/Xfiles, keeps up-to-date tabs on current shows, along with an assortment of trivia, an in-depth episode guide, photos and even film footage along with behind-the-scenes interviews (such as one with makeup artist Toby Lindala).

But the Delphi page is anything but alone.

Not long after that site popped up, some students at Rutgers University set up a deep well of a site, connecting it to their excellent UFO home page. Then, in an almost eerie fashion, others began to creep up at odd locations: Denmark, Australia, Vancouver and New Jersey. Everywhere, the X-Philes proudly proclaimed their love for the forbidden, the unexplained and the sex appeal of David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson.

Then, like alien abductees who start to realize others have been taken aboard by the Greys, they started to find one another. They formed newsgroups, multiple FAQs and sites dedicated to everything from *The X-Files* Drinking Game to the scenes in Vancouver used in the show.

"The Internet is as important as you make it," Carter says. "It's a forum for fans to get online and talk about the show, and it's a nice thing for them in that way. And it's a nice thing for me because I get immediate feedback on the things that I'm doing every week."

However, as the sites begin to proliferate and multiply like a mutant creature off one of the show's own story lines, we must ask a few questions. First, why the fuss? But more importantly, how much truth really is out there and can it fill that many sites? After awhile, many seem to become repetitive, with links to the same FAQs episode summaries and even the same Wav files. Many use photos culled from identical sources.

We've identified less than 10 original opening graphics. Perhaps all this makes one wonder whether putting up a new *X-Files* page might just be an exercise in bandwidth-sucking, unless someone can come up with something truly original. That concern reaches out to any subject with multiple sites.

When Danny Sanders of The Netherlands started his site, he said there were only about 10 or 15 others *X-Files* pages worldwide and most of them looked terrible.

"Since then, the number of sites has increased rapidly, but a lot of them still have nothing to offer but a couple of links to other sites," Sanders said. "My site is different because it contains a lot of audio samples of the so-called

Evidence File: *X-Files* sites from this story

The Gillian Anderson Home Page
http://gpu2.srv.ualberta.ca/~mlwalter/GAHP.html
Nice tribute to the thespian who plays Agent Scully so deftly

The *X-File* Cards site
http://www.bchs.uh.edu/~ecantu/xfcards/cards.html
Shows the faces of the cards with information to order.

***The X-Files* Episode Guide**
http://www.pacificnet.net/~fidodido/xfiles-ep-guide.html
Total ubiquilink with synposis of each *X-Files* show

The Web Files
http://www.printnet.com/webfiles/recipemenu.html
An interesting collection of "*X-Files*" like stories.

Michael Kleinhenz's *X-Files* Page
http://www.unix-ag.uni-kl.de/~kleinhen/
German guy with an interesting page with sound files he makes himself.

The XXY-Files
http://users.aol.com/hytritium/xxy.html
Parody of the show.

You Know You're an X-Phile When...
http://www.iscs.nus.sg/~chengmin/xfiles/html/youknow.html
Mildly amusing discourse on X-addiction.

X Marks the Spot
http://www.cyberstore.ca/vanmag/9408/XMarks.html
A guide to X-scenes shot in Vancouver.

The Singapore *X-Files* Page
http://www.iscs.nus.sg/~chengmin/xfiles/xf.html
An excellent page with unique links and original content.

'Mulderisms,' (also known as Mulder and Scully-isms," Sanders says. "I make the samples myself and every week, a few days after a new episode has aired, samples of that episode are on the page."

Like Sanders, many X-Philes decided that they wanted to express their endearment (read: obsession) with the show in their own way. Among them was Ryan Herbst of Redwood City, Calif.

"My Web page is very unique in a few ways. The most apparent is that it is primary purpose is to keep a tally of how the audience feels about each episode. It is the only site I know of that has this feature. All of the other *X-Files* sites have pictures and various tidbits and many tend to look very much alike," Hebst said.

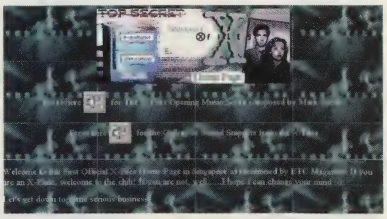
Other X-Philes mentioned the same thing. A few even mentioned their own sites were not unlike the masses. "In some ways, (my site) is similar to others," says Victor Chan of Alberta, Canada. "There is only so much info out there, no pun intended, about the show that it gets to be redundant if you visit many sites. Of course, if a page tries to be too comprehensive and include all the available information on one site, then what's the attraction in Web surfing?"

MULDER: You have to admit, this is exciting. These Web pages and all.
SCULLY: Yeah. Ranks right up there with getting a pony and learning to braid my own hair.

Access Denied

One X-Phile has exiled America Online and Microsoft Network users from her site, creating a lengthy list of angry retorts. At the Bureau of Federal Investigation at http://www.fbi.gov./, users have to go through a phony security login in order to gain access. All it takes is to randomly entering any words or digits. But some people just weren't getting it, said Liem Bahneman of Seattle.

"I began to get a large amount of mail from people, primarily America Online subscribers who were paranoid about the whole process," Bahneman said. "I could understand the confusion by non-Americans, but the large amount of mail from AOL was just amazing. So instead of answering each one and hand-holding them through the process of connecting, I just block them out."



Brahneman added a little note to AOL users on the site, explaining the block and offering them a chance to respond. Most had vile, angry retorts. A few took on a sour grapes attitude. "I didn't want to see your stupid site anyway," miffed one AOL user. (A more savvy surfer complained to the postmaster on Bahneman's host server. Unfortunately for him, Bahneman *is* the postmaster.)

"Recently, I began getting more and more 'will the FBI get me if I try to connect?' messages from MSN, so they too have been denied access," Brahneman said. He admits it would have been easier to just put a link on the page to explain how to get through the front-page. "But that would ruin the feeling of intrigue that I am trying to generate with these pages."

MULDER:All these sites. They remind me of nightmares.
SCULLY: I didn't think anything gave you nightmares.
MULDER: Well, I was young.

Lurking

Chris Carter does scan the 'net newsgroups from time to time. Evidence of this appeared in an episode, according to X-Phile Olcay Cirit of Saratoga, Calif.

"In one episode, the passenger list for the airplane Mulder is on contained the names of frequent Usenet posters," Cirit says.

What's not known is whether Anderson and Duchovny do the same. Anderson has done IRC (inter-relay chat) sessions, but does she look at the pages set up to fawn her? Most of X-Philes *IU* reached agreed that they might.

"I think it's a bit embarrassing, too," Bahneman notes. "They're just actors, and its just a TV show, but there are hundreds of people out there building little shrines to them."
MULDER: That's weird. I was sure I logged off.
SCULLY: Must be an X-File. ○

—Additional reporting by Edward Gross

The Truth Is Not Here

Thought you'd get the answers with an easy flip of the page? Our dear, misguided reader. Think you've identified which of the Mulder and Scullyisms are the real thing? Write X-File Guy at IU@mcs.net and find out. If you rank high on the X-File-O-Meter (we just love hyphens), we'll post your name at our Web site at http://www.nuke.com/underground.html

The Lack of TeXt-Files

You too can create your very own *X-Files* home page! It isn't hard. After all, many sites simply add a few links, slap in a logo and a background and voila! One night, surfing for this story, we went through 11 sites without hitting one that had original content—they were made up solely of links to other people's sites. Those sites, in turn, were made up of links. Is it us, or is that not completely unlike a pyramid scheme? So we decided to deconstruct those sites to find the universal X-Page components. As a service to our readers, we've used this information to assemble an X-Page-0-Matic so you can display your X-Phileness with a page of your very own.

Step 1: Set up a background. Choose standard black or a pattern of repetitive X's (known as X-tiles).

Step 2: Choose a logo from the show to lead off your page. You can steal one from one of these sites:
The World's Biggest *X-Files* Archive at http://dynamics.rug.ac.be:81/http://einstein.rug.ac.be:80/~roeland/xfiles/index.html or the *X-Files* Resource Page at http://www.amaroq.com/x-files/

Step 3. Pick out a couple of photos of actors Gillian Anderson and David Duchovny. You can get them from here **http://rschp2.anu.edu.au:8080/XFimages/images.html** or take them from other fan sites. Try to pick out some that are not too terribly flattering.

Step 4. Add a few spooky *X-Files* sounds. Allowing users to download the entire theme song is virtually *de rigeur*. You can get that and much more from http://rschp2.anu.edu.au:8080/XFsounds/sounds.html

Step 5. Do a search with your Web engine, find a few sites and add their URLs to your page. Be sure to include a few standard ubiquilinks. Among them:

An X-Files FAQ
http://weber.u.washington.edu/~roland/x-files/faq.html or http://www.pacificnet.net/~fidodido/20q.txt

The Official *X-Files* Page
http://www.delphi.com/XFiles/

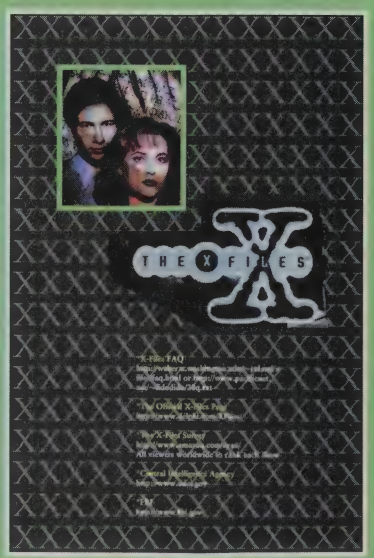
The *X-Files* Survey
http://www.amaroq.com/ryan/
All viewers worldwide to rank each show

Central Intelligence Agency
http://www.odci.gov

FBI
http://www.fbi.gov

Rome Air Force Base
http://www.rl.af.mil
alt.tv.xfiles

Follow our non-patented directions and you'll have a page that looks something similar to this:



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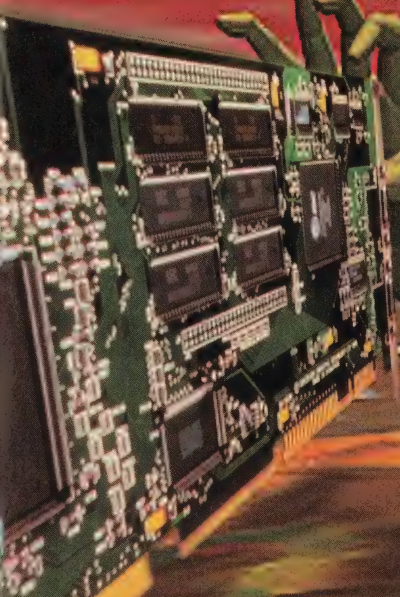

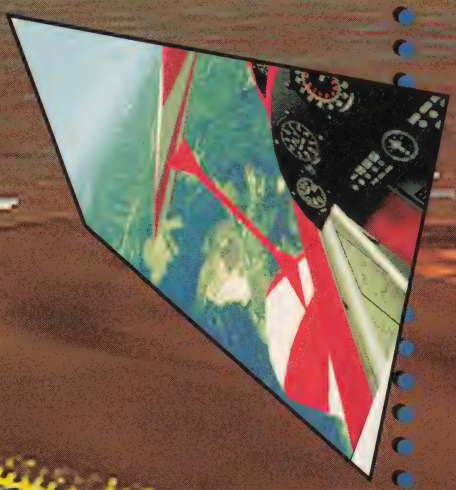

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Benignly rolled,

innocently fresh,

a seemingly

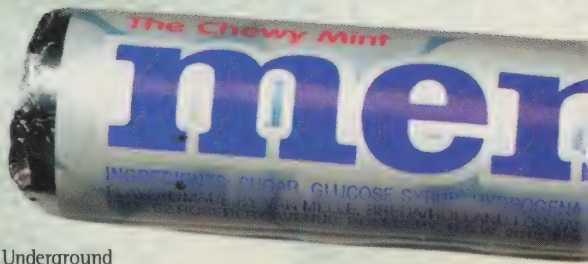
unassuming mint

has inspired an

odd, almost cultish

following on

the 'net



Are
We
Not
Mentos?
mentos
The Chewy Mixed Fruit
mentos
Artificially Flavored
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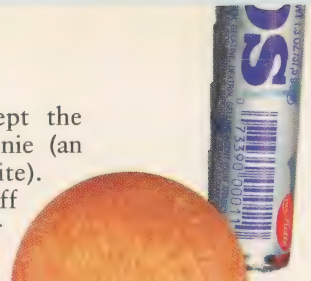
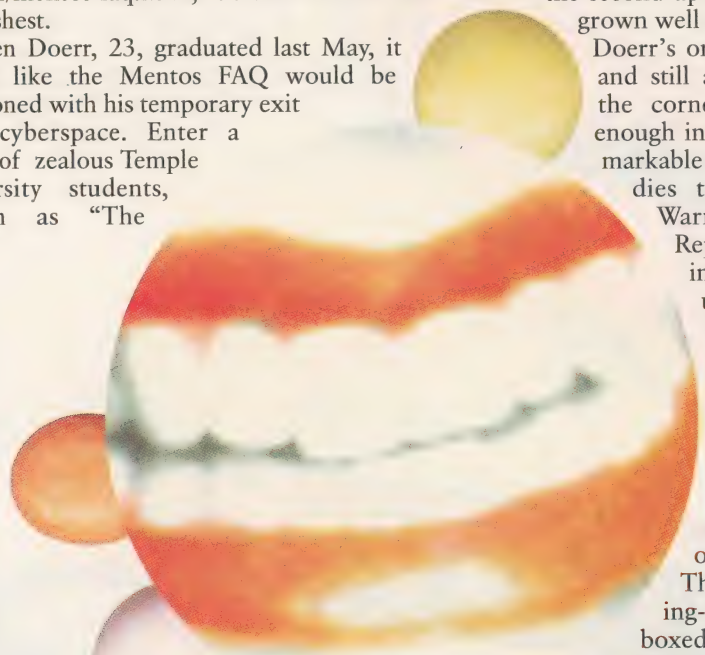


Fresh

For Heath Doerr it started as a whim. Having seen a lot of discussion of Mentos commercials on the newsgroup rec.arts.tv, Doerr, at the time a Purdue University senior, decided to summarize each of the candy's 30-second television ads, those pararables in which "fresh and full of life" youths are faced with predicaments that can only be solved by downing a minty Mento. He jokingly dubbed the file the "Mentos FAQ."

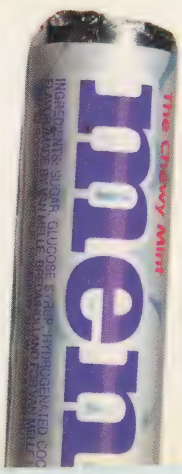
Doerr, who admits to not even being a particularly big fan of the candy, never anticipated the response to the FAQ. After drawing the attention of thousands of readers, not to mention reporters for *The New York Times, Newsweek* and *Wired,* it's not unfair to say the Mentos FAQ is easily one of the most recognized humor documents on the bandwidth. Now with FAQ version 5.0 at http://www3.gse.ucla.edu/~cjones/mentos-faq.html, it's also one of the the freshest.

When Doerr, 23, graduated last May, it looked like the Mentos FAQ would be abandoned with his temporary exit from cyberspace. Enter a group of zealous Temple University students, known as "The Gathering," who have kept the site from becoming an Annie (an obviously abandoned site). Gathering member Jeff Nucera, a 19-year-old junior from Philadelphia, contacted Doerr last spring with information about a Japanese Mentos ad that had been shown in one of his classes. "Heath told me he would put it in the next version of the FAQ, which he said would be the last because he was graduating and leaving the 'net," Nucera recalls. After sobbing uncontrollably for days, Nucera says he contacted the other members of the Gathering to see what they thought about taking over the FAQ. Figuring it couldn't hurt to ask, "I told Heath we had six incredibly stange and fun people willing to take good care of it and he let us have it," Nucera says. Doerr, who is now pursuing his MBA at Wake Forest, says he made the Gathering promise not to make a profit off the site and to remain true to its original spirit before handing over the reigns to six strangers in another time zone.



Full

The 5.0 version, which debuted in late November, is the second update by the Gathering. The FAQ has grown well beyond the commercial synopsises of Doerr's original work. Though those original, and still amazingly fresh descriptions remain the cornerstone of the FAQ, there's now enough information about the seemingly unremarkable mint and fruit candies to fill a veritable Warren Commission Report. New features include a commercial update, longer sections on different flavors of Mentos available in the United States and abroad and a link to a new site, The Mentos Journal, featuring longer works by Mentos fans. The first journal entry contains a virtual dissertation on commercial #4, "The Car Movers." The author likens the struggle of a working-class woman whose economy car is boxed in by a unthinking and decidedly unfresh yuppie-type in his sports sedan, to the age old struggle of the proletariat vs. the *bourgeoisie.* Yet another reason for Mentoholics to rejoice: Nucera says he now hopes to update the FAQ monthly—five months passed between versions 4.0 and 5.0.



Life

Doerr is quick to credit the legions of Mentos fans across the 'net, for the growth in breadth and scope of the FAQ. His original work was meant to be a parody of FAQs, which at the time seemed to be popping up for every subject no matter how inane. He was sur-

prised when people started to take it seriously, e-mailing him enough new Mentos information to warrant fresh versions. "It started out as a joke. I had no intention of making it bonafide. I never did any of the research myself," Doerr says, "It's basically a joke that got out of hand." Though the FAQ had its fans when it was posted to various newsgroups, Doerr says its popularity skyrocketed once it was posted on the Web a month after it was originally conceived.

As for the strange cult appeal of the commercials and their sing-song jingle, Doerr has his thoughts. "My conclusion is that ads most commonly *try* to portray people you and I would like to be. Like in the Mountain Dew ads with those sky-divers and such. I don't think anybody wants to be like the people in the Mentos commercial. The ads fail to the point that it's intriguing and they become almost cool." Doerr has found that the commercials really strike a chord with anyone who has ever seen them. "In any conversation about commercials, Mentos inevitably come up."

and

One of the first controversies within the FAQ, was a debate over the commercials' origins. Though they have the unique flavor of Europeans trying (in vain) to portray hip versions of American teens, it turns out the commercials where all conceived by an American; some were even filmed in the United States. As the FAQ grew in popularity, people weighed in with tidbits about people meeting actors from the commercials or recognizing a location in the commercial. "The commercials are full of a lot of unanswered questions" Doerr says, "You watch them just to try and figure them out. Everyone wants some explanation."

Full of profits, too

of

One thing is certain; there's no arguing the commercials' effect on the bottom line at Mentos parent company Van Melle. According to an *Advertising Age* article quoted in the FAQ, "sales (of Mentos) have increased from $20 million in 1991 to about $40 million today." Doerr, for one, worries that the success of the commercials will be their downfall if they become self-consciously dorky. "The phenomena can only go so far. You just can't manufacture the angst of the first few. But with the money they're making, why should they stop?" Jen Margolis, a marketing brand assistant with Van Melle, is reticent when it comes to the topic of the popularity of the Mentos site. "It's set up by the consumers," she says of the official company reaction to the FAQ, "it's not used at all by us." With companies spending tens of thousands of dollars

The Mentos Gallery

One West Coast Mentos fan has elevated the candies to works of art, literally. At http://zocalo.net/~dan-wood/mentos/index.html, you can view The Mentos Gallery, or "In other words, a horrible butchering of great art." California software developer and graphics artist Dan Wood has basically altered a couple of classic paintings by adding a roll of Mentos to the scenery. So far, there are only two paintings, a Vermeer of a woman and an unknown Dutch artist's rendition of musicians. (Perhaps they were writing the first Mentos theme?) Plus, Wood has reworked the *Babylon 5* logo to be Mentos ad format, which is only natural since Wood contributes to the Lurker's Guide to Babylon 5 available at http://www.hyperion.com/lurk/lurker.html.

Wood says he's always loved the Mentos commercials, but never got into the phenomonen until he read the FAQ. He hopes that with the increasing awareness of the FAQ, people will start contributing their own artwork to the gallery. For now, Wood says his next picture will be in the style of modern art, "Perhaps a cubist Picasso, a Braque look or something impressionistic."

—A.G.

The Facts of Fresh and Full of Life

EXCERPTS FROM THE MENTOS FAQ:

FROM "COMMERCIAL SYNOPSIS"

THROUGH THE CAR (OR 'THE THREE-SECOND CAR JACKING')

THERE IS LITTLE PEACE IN THE LAND OF MENTOS, AS YET ANOTHER TEEN IS FACED WITH A DISTRESSING PROBLEM. WHILE CROSSING THE STREET, HE IS SEPARATED FROM HIS FRIENDS AND NEARLY FROM HIS LEGS BY AN OVER ANXIOUS MOTORIST. FINDING HIMSELF NEEDING TO TRAVERSE THE STREET, BUT WITHOUT A NORMAL MEANS TO DO SO, HE AGAIN THANKS HIS LUCKY STARS HE REMEMBERED THE FRESHMAKER. HIS SUPPLY IS REDUCED BY ONE, BUT HIS FRESHNESS IS INCREASED EXPONENTIALLY. OPENING THE REAR DOOR, HE CLIMBS THROUGH THE AUTO, WHILE THE DRIVER LOOKS OVER HIS SHOULDER IN ASTONISHMENT. UPON EXITING, THE YOUTH SHRUGS AT THE MOTORIST, MENTOS IN HAND. ALTHOUGH A BIT SHAKEN, THE PASSENGER ACKNOWLEDGES THE CAREFREE YOUTHS WITH AN APPROVING GLANCE AS HE SPEEDS AWAY. "WAIT 'TIL THE WIFE HEARS OF MY BRUSH WITH FRESHNESS!"

FROM "COMMERCIAL HISTORY, ORIGIN, AND EXPLANATION"

"BUT WAIT! THERE'S MORE! DANIEL SPAULDING (LAMPREY@KAIWAN.COM) WORKS IN COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION IN LOS ANGELES. HE SAYS HE MET THE ACTOR WHO PLAYED THE DOORMAN IN MENTOS COMMERCIAL #2, *THE FAKE PHOTOGRAPHER*! THE ACTOR'S NAME IS GENE, AND HE SAID THAT THE SPOT WAS SHOT ABOUT THREE YEARS AGO AT THE UNIVERSAL HILTON IN UNIVERSAL CITY. IT WAS A TWO-DAY NIGHT SHOOT, FROM 6 P.M. TO 6 A.M. GENE CONFIRMED THAT THE DIRECTOR AND CREW WERE AMERICAN."

FROM "FLAVOR CONSIDERATIONS"

"ANDREA (APF62@CAS.ORG) FOUND 'TROPICAL MENTOS' WHILE VACATIONING IN JAMAICA. THE CANDIES COME IN ORANGE, LIME GREEN AND LAVENDER VARIETIES, AND TASTE LIKE ORANGE, GUAVA AND SOMETHING INDISCERNIBLE, SHE WRITES. THE PACKAGING, LIKE MIXED FRUIT, HAS A PICTURE OF THE VARIOUS COLORS FOUND INSIDE. ONE LAST INTERESTING NOTE: THE INGREDIENTS WERE PRINTED IN GREEK AS WELL AS ENGLISH."

FROM: JINGLE LYRICS:

DOO DOO DOO DOO,
DOO-DOO, DO-WAH!
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT
COMES, FRESH GOES BETTER IN LIFE,
WITH MENTOS, FRESH AND FULL OF LIFE.
NOTHING GETS TO YOU, STAYING FRESH STAYING COOL,
WITH MENTOS, FRESH AND FULL OF LIFE.
FRESH GOES BETTER, MENTOS FRESHNESS, FRESH GOES
BETTER WITH MENTOS, FRESH AND FULL OF LIFE!
MENTOS, THE FRESHMAKER!

THE KEEPERS OF THE MENTOS FAQ, THE GATHERING (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP): BRIAN MACKENZIE, DAVE BOCK, SEAN QUINN, JEFF NUCERA, KEVIN KIBELSTIS AND STACEY LEIDER. THE FAQ FOUNDER, HEATH DOERR, LACKED A FRESH PHOTO, THOUGH WE ASSURE YOU HE IS STILL FULL OF LIFE.

FROM: THE CANDIES

THE MINT FLAVOR VARIETY UNSURPRISINGLY TASTE LIKE PEPPERMINT, AND COULD BE CONSIDERED TO POSSESS A BREATH FRESHENING FUNCTION AS WELL AS A COOL, MENTHOL-LIKE AFTERTASTE. MIXED FRUIT HAVE NONE OF THESE PROPERTIES, BUT ARE INSTEAD QUITE SWEET. THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE FLAVORS CONTAINED IN A MIXED FRUIT PACKAGE ARE SMALL. COLOR SEEMS TO BE THE ONLY REAL DISTINGUISHABLE QUALITY. STRAWBERRY ARE ALSO SWEET, BUT CONTAIN A LIGHT, AND UNMISTAKABLE STRAWBERRY FLAVOR. CINNAMON DO INDEED TASTE LIKE CINNAMON, POSSESSING A SEMI-CINNAMON BURN FEELING OFTEN FOUND IN STRONG CINNAMON GUM. SPEARMINT ARE CLOSELY RELATED TO MINT, AND ARE LUCKY ENOUGH TO SERVE AS A BREATH FRESHENER AS WELL.

NoMentoclature

One of the newest sections on the FAQ is dedicated to mentos definitions. Submitted for your approval are some of our own:

Mentocide: The act of eating the last mento from a pack, effectiviely killing it off.

Mentodramatics: The overwrought emotion one feels when wronged, leading to the desire to down a Mento and correct the situation.

Mentonopoly: The act of buying up all the Mentos from a single store.

Mentopause: The amount of time between eating Mentos.

Mentorabilia: The unexpected mentos you find in your pocket that has fallen out of the pack.

Mentorandum: The act of alerting other people that a Mentos commerical is on.

Mentos a trois: Eating three Mentos at once.

Mentosophy: The study of Mentos.

Mentostopheles: A person who uses Mentos for evil means rather than freshness.

Mentowledgement: The knowing look an adult gives a teen who does something crazy under the influence of Mentos.

and tripping over each other to have a unique presence on the Web, it's a little surprising that Van Melle would be so reluctant to bask in the free publicity the site has garnered.

Doerr is quick to praise the job the Gathering has done maintaining the FAQ. Where Doerr says he really never eats Mentos, Nucera says he and his friends truly love the candy. Nucera, who always carries a pack no matter where he goes, says that people around campus and in his classes know him as the "Mentos guy" which often results in people perpetually mooching Mentos from him. It's exactly that kind of notoriety that Doerr never sought. In fact, when asked to send a photo to run with this article he declined, saying "high school yearbook photos are definitely out, so I guess I'll just have to fade away into anonymity. Which in some sense is all the better." Nucera says that all six members of the Gathering help maintain the FAQ, though he tends to do most of the work, mostly just typing in all the stuff. Nucera, who lives at home, does most of the task from the back of the school's computer lab where the Gathering meet rather than on his home computer, an old Commodore 64.

> "It's basically a joke that got out of hand"
> -FAQ Founder Heath Doerr

Fiction filled with freshness

Brian MacKenzie, another member of the Gathering, has been concentrating his efforts for the FAQ on several adapted works of Mentos fiction. On the drawing board:

- The Tao of Mentos: "If you ever meet a Buddha on the road, offer him a Freshmaker!"
- No, That's Not True, It's Not a Freshmaker!!!: A Star Wars tale in which Luke is tortured by being forced to eat Mint Chews.
- There Can Only Be Freshness: A Highlander tale in which Connor Macleoad is caught beheading someone, but gets away after popping a Mento.
- Mento, Fresh Blood Part 2: Rambo hunts down his former commander who keeps swearing that the singular of Mentos is still Mentos, not Mento.

Dave Bock, also a Gathering member, says they are all a bit overwhelmed by the global response to the FAQ. "We even have people from all over the world sending us different flavors of Mentos that are not available here in the States." As for the foreign Mentos flavors, Bock reports that Apple Mentos are "awesome," but fellow Gathering member Sean Quinn says somewhat reluctantly that "not all Mentos varieties are fresh." Don't think for a minute though, that The Gathering are just in it for free candy. They take their Mentos work seriously. "We're really proud to be the caretakers of the Mentos FAQ and we owe Heath a great deal of thanks," Bock says.

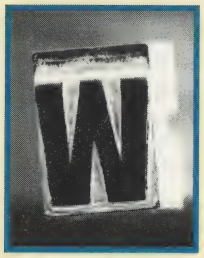
Nucera says if he had to pick a favorite Mentos commercial it would be pretty difficult, but he would probably lean toward the "The Three-Second Car Jacking" in which a Nordic-looking teen has no tolerance for an absent-minded motorist who has stopped on the crosswalk just as he is making his way across the street.

Not surprisingly, Nucera says he doesn't have a least favorite ad.

"They're all so good," he adds freshly, and oh yes, full of life.

A
CONVERSATION
WITH
THE
CANDYMAN

The archivist who collects recipes for everything from bomb making to lock picking talks about his sour attitude toward the mainstream media.



ell, it wasn't exactly a *conversation*. I dropped CandyMan some e-mail, naively suggesting that since we had accounts on the same access provider, we obviously both lived in the metropolitan Chicago area. Perhaps we could meet? I assured him of my willingness to keep his identity anonymous.

His ominous response: "It is out of the question that we meet face to face."

I felt a bit foolish. After all, he does act as the keeper of a great deal of controversial and threatened speech on bombs, drugs and fraud. In the aftermath of the Oklahoma bombing, his site and others became targets for censor-happy conservatives who feel "dangerous" topics should be taken off the 'net. Recently, America Online put its lawyers on his tail for distributing instructions on hacking into the online service's software for free access. They made him take the information off his site at http://www.mcs.net/ ~candyman/home.html.

So I asked for a telephone interview. I gave him my phone number and, like a gullible coed, I waited for a phone call that would never come. The next time I logged on, I had e-mail from the CandyMan, instructing me to write up my questions and send them to him in a file titled "Interview" so he could consider the merit of my questions.

Hmmm. I wasn't used to all this weighing, judging and qualification. But I wrote up a list and e-mailed it over. Apparently it hit the mark. CandyMan sent me a polite e-mail telling me that he would respond in essay format and that he would be willing to follow up with a UNIX talk session.

A co-worker whose idea of privacy is closing the miniblinds looked puzzled when I mentioned the terms and constraints of the interview. She said, "Have you offered to meet him in a church and speak through the screen of the confessional booth?" We smirked at the idea, but it made us think. I had shared quite a bit of information with this stranger and with many other faceless entities on the 'net. After reading the information on CandyLand, I started to wonder if perhaps those of us who are overly trusting are the real weirdos in this world.

By Sarah Ellerman

When I spoke with him, CandyMan shattered any lingering stereotypes that I might have had of anarchists or hackers. He didn't deconstruct spelling or capitalization like many subversives do: I didn't even see a stray "d00d." He was polite, articulate and carefully considered his answers. We even had fun comparing ideas. This was no mad bomber or lawless freak—just an intelligent, 19-year-old college student looking to keep information the way he likes it: absolutely free.

Internet Underground:
When did CandyLand begin? Did it have any incarnation prior to being a Web site?

CandyMan: CandyLand started off originally as a WWW site and remains to this day solely a WWW site. It began Dec. 1, 1994, and has grown in content considerably since with contributors from around the world.

IU: *Do you receive a lot of encouragement and/or visitors?*

CM: The support I have received has been overwhelming. My home page is serving over 500,000 hits per week. The Underground page alone is accessed 35,000-plus times per week. These numbers are growing at record rates daily!

IU: *How separate is your CandyMan identity from your real life? Do your friends, family and acquaintances know about CandyLand, or is that 100 percent separate from your straight life?*

CM: The two are almost completely isolated. There are only a few friends who are aware of the services that I provide.

IU: *You say on your site that you're a student. Could I ask what you study?*

CM: Computer Science.

IU: *Yeah, I figured.*

CM: (indicates laughter)

IU: *Would you object to being labeled a hacker?*

CM: Yes...I would not define myself as such. I do have some knowledge of hacker methodology. But your hacking questions are best left to the "true hackers."

IU: *I was wondering if you could tell me a little about how you got interested in the topic. I sort of figure that people don't just become rabid about privacy for no reason.*

CM: Well, by "topic," you are meaning the whole underground content that I provide?

IU: *Yes. I mean, I'm confining my definition to you providing the forum and archiving things.*

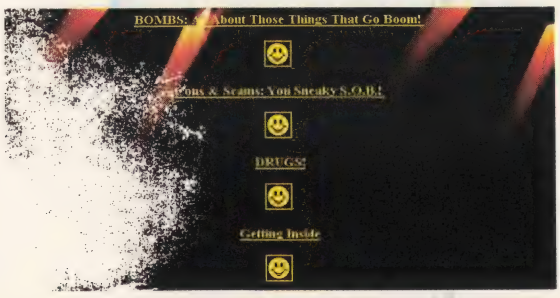
CM: Before the Internet came into my view, I used to call up various local BBSs in the Chicago area. As I browsed through them, I noticed some advertising for other systems and noticed some forums that I began to read. As time went by, I grew interested in "underground" topics. Then later down the road, I began browsing various sites on the Internet. I liked the Internet because of the large forum, and the fact that any information can be provided to a large audience. I did notice there were some sites specializing in underground content, but it seemed none were *really* comprehensive on the issues.

I also believe that First Amendment rights are very important and in some cases should be...not *challenged,* exactly...but the right to freedom of speech and press should be exercised and defended. I believe that no information should be restricted no matter what the topic/content. In providing the information, I keep it alive, so to speak. I keep the information available in the "library" so that if individuals do wish to seek it out it, it is unrestricted and the individual can perform/apply his or her own morals or responsibility to the info they find in their searches.

IU: *What kind of resources (both time and money) do you spend on your site?*

CM: I spend approximately $125 per quarter. This cost relates to my phone bills and Internet account. Web access does not incur any extra fees. The time spent on the page varies from week to week. I would roughly estimate that two hours per week is invested into the site. That time estimate correlates to adding files, HTML improvements in design and functionality to the site. The time is also spent in filtering out the relevant e-mails received and replying with answers if possible or directing the individuals to the proper source.

IU: *What would you estimate is the percentage of positive to negative feedback that you get through e-mail?*



CM: Approximately one negative e-mail per 100 positive e-mails.

IU: *Do you feel that people appreciative of your endeavors are more likely to be online and those disapproving are probably ignorant of the 'net?*

CM: It is difficult to forecast or categorize the appreciativeness of the individuals on the net versus those who are ignorant of it because the net is a very diverse community. Furthermore, as time goes by, the number of individuals in who can be categorically called ignorant of the 'net will be slim to none due to the occurrence of more and more organizations, schools and companies being connected to the Internet. I would agree, though, that a large percentage of the disapprovals do seem to be fielded by individuals who are ignorant of the ways of the Internet community. Furthermore, I would attribute this disapproval to media hype. The fact that the different major media networks compete for ratings and will be as exploitative as possible to achieve the top ratings is nothing new.

The problem here is that they are no longer performing their duties in that they are to be reporting the news; rather they are involved in the action of distorting the news when they relay it to the mass audience. The most notable is their fascination with the 'net; 99 percent of the time they are reporting on something about which they have little or no knowledge. Most of the reporters think that AOL is the Internet. I would venture to say that nine out of 10 reports or specials relating to the 'net are negative, exploitative and distorted whose only purpose is to receive top ratings. The victims of this type of behavior are a misinformed general public, a persecuted 'net community, and the right to freedom of speech that is jeopardized through proposed Internet regulation.

IU: *Do you do a lot of interviews?*

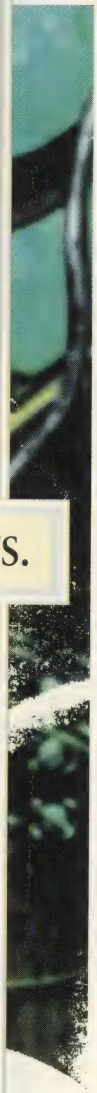
CM: I do a few here and there, answering Q&As over e-mail but nothing big yet. When my site receives negative media, it's rare that I get an option to respond in the story. It's no surprise. They want control of the story.

IU: *Tell me your thoughts about the prevalent media reactions to sites dealing with controversial information. What kind of press do you get?*

CM: I believe the media is exploitative and distorting in presenting news, even more so when presenting news/stories related to the Internet. My site receives various press and reviews. Some in favor, others in the middle, others rejecting and others just citing the fact that the information is in existence on the Internet.

IU: *How did the Oklahoma bombing contribute to the public's image of the Internet?*

CM: It was during the Oklahoma bombing that certain politicians utilized the event as a springboard to attempt to pass their foolish legislation that would further restrict the individual's rights. One was the banning of all bomb plans, clearly a violation of our rights to freedom of speech/press.



THE BANNING OF BOMB PLANS IS A VIOLATION OF OUR RIGHTS.

IU: *Do you feel that the U.S. government is hypocritical?*

CM: Yes. I also strongly believe recent and past actions of the state and federal government are slowly leading the nation into a police state. There has been talk about eliminating search warrants, and there has been legislation to ban (censor) the reading, transferring, authoring or archiving of bomb-making plans. Actions of certain governmental agencies (not limited to the ATF in Waco, Texas) have shown the total abolishment of certain laws/guidelines that the various agencies are supposed to follow.

IU: *Do you believe that freedom of speech is of paramount importance? What might be more important?*

CM: I do firmly believe freedom of speech is of extreme importance as it is one of the founding rights upon which this country was based.

IU: *Do you feel that the American public is ignorant of their own right to free speech?*

CM: I don't perceive it that way, but I do feel that most Americans are unaware of the value that they assign to their right to free speech in situations in which their free speech is threatened or violated.

IU: *Is your right to disseminate information often questioned?*

CM: It is rarely questioned by the general visitors, though I do receive the very small percentage of negative e-mail which discourages my right to exercise free speech.

The right to disseminate information is currently being questioned by individuals who are attempting to revoke my and other persons' right to disseminate information. Those individuals are the misinformed, heavily lobbied politicians that have seats in Congress.

IU: *Would you describe your personal views on the activities described on your site?*

CM: No comment.

IU: Do you feel any urge within yourself to apply moral distinctions to the reality of bombing, revenge, eavesdropping, fraud, etc., even if you do believe in the fundamental propriety of making such information available? Or do you feel that the academic elements of the discussion are wholly separate from the acts they imply?

CM: At times in the past, I have consciously struggled with these moral distinctions. After further reflection on the matter, I concluded that the institution of these morals would ultimately be the act of censorship, and furthermore the imposition of another individual's morals upon a mass audience. Moreover, morality is a realm that individuals themselves define and practice for themselves. Thus the defined morals of a central individual should not be imposed onto others.

Therefore, I have disseminated the information, thus allowing the individual's own values, responsibility, morals and actions govern over those who shall ultimately dictate whether the information is retrieved and whether it is used or misused. Utilizing the above set of rationales allows for the visitor to exercise his or her own individual responsibility and choose the path best suited for him or herself.

To an extent, I do perceive that academic elements of the discussion are indeed separate from the acts that they imply. The reason for this is that several of the plans found within the site offer scientific or social merit. Furthermore, the portions of information that are found within the site are at times studied by individuals, organizations or companies for enlightenment about the strategies of fraud that may be waged against them. Through their study, they are able to institute the proper counterstrategies to combat the fraud that they may or may not be subjected to.

IU: *Do you feel that certain forms of fraud that have no individual victim, but rather rip off a huge establishment, are in some way justified? I'm primarily asking about stuff like getting free phone calls. Can this be seen as a form of protest in action? Or is it more random, fun, lawless and trivial than all that?*

CM: This is a matter in which the case involved dictates the justification or lack thereof. Defrauding phone networks is not justified today, although the action of defrauding telephone networks would seem acceptable to a certain extent in situations where phone companies impose a virtual monopoly upon certain geographical borders and charge inflated fees to the general consumer. A few of the cases could be viewed as a protest against the large establishments. More often than not, though, the acts are committed for fun, technical knowledge and socializing long distance with friends while at the same time foiling the inflated fees of the service.

IU: *Even if you have no legal responsibility for acts committed after reading the files you archive, would you in any way feel a personal responsibility if someone came to harm from the knowledge?*

CM: No, I would feel no personal responsibility if an individual were to use or misuse the information found within the site. The reason for this is that there is an introductory note/warning clearly stating the danger to the maker/bystanders/victims. The visitors are urged to read through an introductory book of chemistry among other things. There is also a Safety file, which is the very first file in the listing of files. This file notifies individuals of the proper methods/tips an individual constructing an explosive device must follow. Plus there are several warnings/safety tips within most of the plans. If an individual is harmed from the construction of these explosives, it is due to their lack of safety procedures and ignorance of chemistry and pyrotechnics.

IU: *Do you find the idea that the files would spur someone to action ridiculous?*

CM: I do not find that idea ridiculous. I am unable to predict the effects that a file may evoke in a group of diverse individuals.

IU: *What's the most trafficked portion of your site? Drugs, bombs, hacking or what?*

CM: I believe it is the bomb page. (Checks stats; confirms that "boom.html" is indeed the most popular subpage on his site.)

IU: *So what did you think about the whole "Hack Netscape" thing?*

CM: No big deal...encryption routines like Netscape used could be cracked by anyone with the proper computing power and knowledge/guessing of their algorithm.

IU: *Do you think people have incorrect ideas about their own privacy? Do you think people should use things like Pretty Good Privacy more?*

CM: Yes. I believe there is no privacy. PGP is the best solution for today to protect files/e-mails... though that too, I believe, will one day be cracked. Though at this date the amount of computing power needed to crack it in our government is unavailable, I am told.

IU: *How safe is someone's e-mail, just sitting on their account?*

CM: Not very safe at all. The system administrator can read it or can do automated filtering to locate specific e-mail topics...anybody who is capable of hacking root on the system is also able to read your e-mail. Some systems may even be misconfigured or reconfigured by individuals with the wrong UNIX permissions on the directory structures in which your e-mail is stored.

Also, it is insecure due to the fact that all other information that is transmitted over the Internet is insecure. The fact is that the info is almost always transferred as unencrypted text in sending packets from site to site until it reaches its destination. If there happens to be a packet sniffer at any point along the path, then the info is compromised.

IU: *I think most people don't suspect that, and would find that very disturbing.*

CM: True.

IU: *So what kind of computer do you work on?*

CM: I work on a 586/100MHz, 16mb RAM, 1gig hard drive, 17-inch monitor, 4x CD-ROM drive, with a 28.8k v.34 modem. I am currently using Windows 95.

IU: *What would bring CandyLand down? Governmental censorship? Would you keep finding a way to get the word out?*

The Candy Landscape

Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;
And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.

As You Like It by William Shakespeare

I first encountered CandyMan's CandyLand a year ago. When I left, I felt more than a little dirty—shocked at how enthusiastically I had gobbled up the information presented there. I'd read about making napalm in the garage, eavesdropping on the neighbors' conversations, making bombs out of household chemicals, hotwiring cars and hacking into computer accounts. Not typical pastimes in my quiet life, but definitely the topic of much embarrassed fascination.

Uncomfortable topics abound. "Getting In" deals with the art and science of lockpicking. "Cons and Scams" details how to scam free stuff in stores, counterfeit money, rip off change machines and decode scrambled pay TV signals. "Drugs!" tells you how to grow psychedelic mushrooms, cook marijuana and get high off of household items. "Bombs! All About Those Things That Go Boom!" gives explicit instructions on making bombs using dry ice, bleach, match heads, and more. It's creepy stuff, no lie. But does that mean that CandyMan should be silenced?

This kind of information has been the subject of much persecution and hysteria. Even as a strong advocate of free speech, I admit that I found myself getting a little squeamish about the bomb plans. They seemed so much more harmful than acts of fraud or theft in which the victim is not confronted and no one comes to any physical harm. I struggled with my own hypocrisy and my distrust of the public. But my talk with CandyMan helped remind me that keeping information free is the highest priority, even if it does make some people squirm in their chairs.

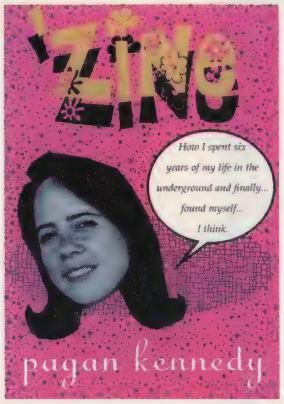
It all boils down to ***this****: Do the files in CandyLand scare you more than the prospect of having your rights taken away does? You have to answer, yes or no. Because you can't have it both ways.*

CM: I am unable to foresee any situations or circumstances that would totally bring CandyLand down. Governmental censorship would most likely be an unenforceable joke. If censorship did pose a serious threat, then one would only need to upload a compressed copy of the content to a WWW site within another country and open shop over there where the domestic laws of the USA would be null and void. Yes, I would still be able to find a method to overcome the imposition of the law and its enforcers.

. . .

CandyMan and I wrapped up our interview, clarifying some key points and making pleasant small talk. To my now world-weary amusement, he declined my offer to send him free copies of this issue because it would mean having to reveal his mailing address. We agreed, instead, that he would buy a copy on the newsstand in order to preserve his valuable anonymity and underground lifestyle.

In *'Zine*, Pagan Kennedy describes her six-year journey of publishing *Pagan's Head*, a cut-and-pasted 'zine that was, well, dedicated to herself. Kennedy started her photocopied, clip-art publication out of frustration from a lack of interest in her fiction writing by New York book agents and a part-time copy-editing job at a computer magazine. Through the ability to create a sort of varied version of her own persona, Kennedy found deeper inspiration in her own talents, an untapped well of creativity and a new-found courage in self-expression. Not to mention, Kennedy's a terrific writer with a biting sense of humor, exemplified in the full versions of *Pagan's Head* reproduced in the book.



'ZINE

BY PAGAN KENNEDY

ST. MARTIN'S PRESS

$15.95

★★★★

All of her 'zines were crudely put together (this was, after all, before desktop publishing made its mark). Most were filled with blatant pop-culture references, with Kennedy's odd fascination with the Partridge Family, a *Pagan's Head* staple. While Kennedy's publishing experiences were limited to paper, her story shows how the ability to publish one's thoughts in an unbridled fashion can be an empowering, even intoxicating experiment. After reading *'Zine* and understanding how it impacted Kennedy's life, taking her from common slacker fiction to popular publisher of an underground mag, you can better understand why so many e-zines hit the ether. —Kathleen Flinn

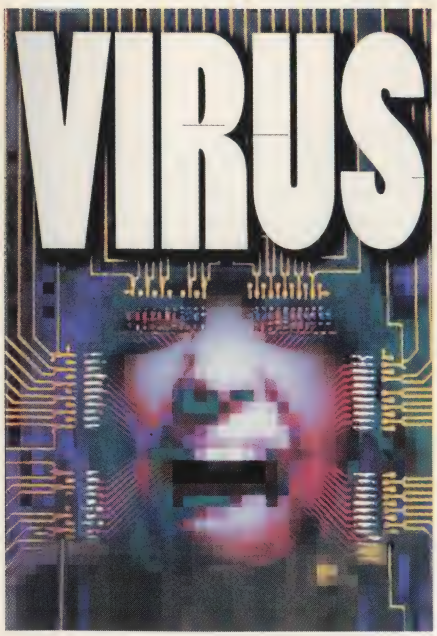
The mark of a truly great screen saver is one that actually encourages unproductivity. In other words, would you rather watch the screen saver than do your work? Totally Twisted, the latest set of savers from Berkeley, definitely makes the grade as one of the most entertaining screen savers since toasters sprouted wings. With 13 different savers in the package, not all are winners, but a few are so good they redefine the genre. For example, "Voyeur" lets you spy on the residents of an apartment building as they go about their business having sex, relieving themselves and/or hunting aliens. There's even one dweller who spends most of his time spanking his monkey, literally. Another great spectator saver is "Mike's So-Called Life," where you observe Mike as he warms TV dinners, plays solitaire Pong and makes fart noises under his arm in his drab domain. If you're having a frustrating day, try "Mime Hunt" where you watch as virtual Marcel Marceaus get blown away. By using the caps lock key you can take over the mayhem. Not malicious enough? Check out "Mowin' Boris" and see what happens when a lawnmower and a kitten meet. Twisted even takes a swipe at the classic Flying Toasters; in their reinterpretation, Flying Toilets now transverse your screen as cows and Elvis look-alikes perched atop soaring commodes do their business. Click on the optional rude noises for the full effect. —Alex Gordon

TOTALLY TWISTED AFTER DARK SCREEN SAVER

BY BERKELEY SYSTEMS

$24.95

★★★★★



VIRUS

BY GRAHAM WATKINS

CARROLL GRAF

$25.00

★★

***Virus*, a new novel by Graham Watkins, represents another attempt to exploit** the growing interest in the Internet and the paranoid fear that someone out there could control people's lives via the information superhighway. In this story, Dr. Mark Roberts and Dr. Alexandra Watkins are squabbling ex-spouses who must work together to find the cause of a strange new ailment. It seems people are addicted to their computers, not showing up for work, forgetting to eat, shutting themselves off from the world. Upon discovering the culprit, a program called Penultimate, they also uncover a fiendish plot by an evil corporation determined to take over the world. Consequently, Mark and Alex even rediscover their feelings for each other.

Virus is not the worst book ever written, but too often it aims for and hits the lowest common dominator. Watkins' writing leaves much to be desired. He suffers from adverb fever. His characters always nod vigorously and shake their heads violently. They say "Gus" succinctly. The characters are interchangeable, and the renewed romance is needless padding. However, with a novel like this, you can't expect the deep characterizations of say a J.D. Salinger or Anne Tyler.

The main problem with *Virus* is that Watkins does not come up with a reasonable explanation for how the program actually can addict users and kill them. The character of Jim Madison functions as a Crichton-esque explainer, barely having any human traits but letting us know that all this could really happen. It doesn't work. How can a blinking computer monitor kill anyone who's not epileptic? At least Crichton comes up with believable nonsense. The way this novel could have worked was to offer at least an understanding of the Internet and how someone could really control it. Sadly, it fails, becoming a book you can read while watching television. —Rob Kozlowski

HOW TO MAKE A FORTUNE ON THE INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY

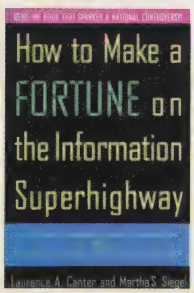
LAURENCE CANTER AND MARTHA SIEGEL

HARPER PERENNIAL $13.00

★

Billed as "the book that sparked a national controversy," *How to Make a FORTUNE on the Information Superhighway* has been released in paperback, giving me the opportunity to remind any of you who are thinking about buying this book not to.

Quite simply, the odds of you making a fortune on the Internet by following the directions in this book are the same as O.J. getting back his gig hawking Hertz rental cars. Reading this book will not make you rich.Authors Laurence Canter and Martha Siegel are the Arizona immigration lawyers who, through spamming newsgroups with ads for their law firm, evoked the ire of the entire 'net community. Sure, the opportunity exists to make some money from their advice; apparently they did quite well from their initial posting. Most of what they suggest, however, is not only a bad breach of netiquette, it's immoral. On top of it all, Canter and Siegel's tone is so self-righteous it makes me want to lose not only my lunch but my breakfast and dinner as well. One example of their deluded logic is their justification for spamming 1,000 newsgroups: "The selection of newsgroups for our Green Card project presented its own challenges... Finally, however, we decided to try them all." Just because the opportunity to make money exists, doesn't make it right to exploit it. After all, you don't see members of the Medellin drug cartel writing a book called *How to Make a FORTUNE from Selling Illegal Drugs.*



—Oliver Wise

"IT'S NOT A BUG, IT'S A FEATURE!" COMPUTER WIT AND WISDOM

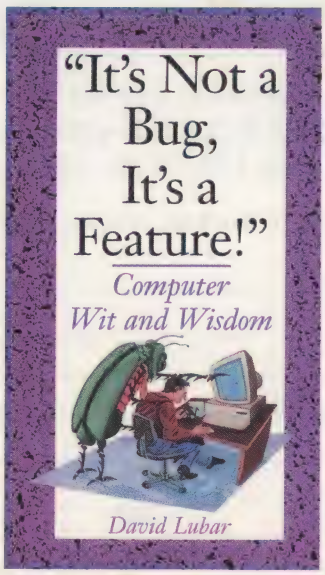
BY DAVID LUBAR

ADDISON-WESLEY

$9.95

★★

This collection of computer quotes goes after a strange subset of the book-buying market: computer addicts who also pick up *Life's Little Instruction Manual.* Yes, this compilation isn't as vapid as most bathroom quick-reads, but it's nothing of much substance, and the wisdom to be culled has a strange nostalgic quality. Many of the quotes about the difficulty of computers and personas of programmers hark back to a simpler day when software was remedial and the information superhighway a vast new frontier. In that light, it has a nice educational feel, like looking through a WWII-era *Popular Mechanics* and snickering at the flying cars predicted for right around the time Reagan came to town. This book isn't really worth dissection—it's got some fascinating quotes, some idiotic ones, several that are irrelevant and at least two from Duckman, though most of these people you've never heard of unless you live and breathe silicon. Of course, if you live and breathe silicon, this book will probably appeal to you greatly; otherwise it's little more than a nice doorstop for the bathroom. —Justin Ware



WATCH ME

BY A.J. HOLT

$22.95

★★★½

In *Watch Me*, Special Agent Janet "Jay" Fletcher is a workaholic FBI special agent, armed with the skills of a hacker and a cop's zeal for justice. When she screws up an investigation, she's moved from Washington, D.C. to Tucson, Ariz., where she moves from tracking arson investigations to tapping into a special, underground interactive world of serial killers online. The book does offer a good primer into the kind of private information that truly is available online, including those stores of information that most people don't consider, such as airline reservation accounts. Many of the hacking techniques described are certainly possible, but a search program she creates to track down the killers didn't seem plausible and certainly would not work with the ease explained by Holt. The basis of the book—that a bunch of UNIX savvy serial killers would be willing to outline crimes that could qualify them for the death penalty in underground IRC chat sessions—just didn't work for me. How did they find each other in the first place? It's not like America Online has a "Serial Killers Only" chat room.In this, Holt's first novel, *Watch Me* essentially seems to take standard plots and mix and match, throwing in new technology for added effect. Consider the following cop plot elements and see if you recognize them:

1) Janet goes by a male name, Jay, as seemingly all female FBI agents/cops/private eyes in books and movies do to prove their toughness. 2) She's a burned out workaholic who lives for the bureau, sharing her D.C. apartment only with her cat. 3) She's a renegade cop who plays by her own rules and gets "sent away" by a superior. 4) Once there, she gets into even more trouble. That said, Holt does create true suspense in sections in the book. We hope the author leaves the cliches behind when logging to write the next computhriller.

—Arizona Clark

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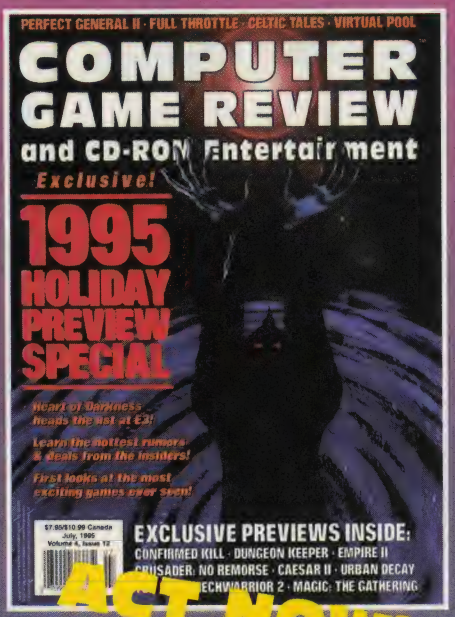

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MISS AMERICA

BY HOWARD STERN

REGAN BOOKS

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★★★★★
FOR STERN FANS

★
FOR NON-STERN FANS

What does America's foremost shock jock have to do with the Internet? In *Miss America*, the follow-up to the surprising best seller *Private Parts*, Stern repeats the style that worked in his first book, ruminating pell-mell on a variety of subjects from his brief career in politics to a meeting with Michael Jackson and yes, the Internet, or as he calls it specifically, in Chapter One, "Cybersurfing for (word ommited per request of FCC officials)" In this chapter, Stern relates his experiences trolling the Prodigy chat rooms for willing cybersex partners. Part of Stern's appeal is his frank discussion of his vulnerable traits. For example, Stern has trouble at first reconciling his behavior. After all, what attractive woman would be sitting in front of her computer in the middle of the day looking for cybersex? Stern's experiences with cybersex follow a classic arc: first fascination, then realization once he meets his partners (one who claimed to look like *Lois & Clark*'s Terri Hatcher was a dead ringer for the fat version of Ricki Lake), and lastly revulsion as Stern swears off cybersex for good, or at least until they develop 3-D goggles with virtual-sex capabilities.

The rest of the book is classic Stern. Whether or not you like it comes down to the simple question of whether or not you like Stern. For those who hate him, *Miss America* will only fuel the fire. For those who love him, this book will only reinforce his position as the King of All Media. And for those fence sitters who have yet to make up their mind—actually there are none of you, so forget it.

—AG

NETSCAPE SMART-MARKS

FIRST FLOOR SOFTWARE

FREE FOR THE DOWNLOADIN'

★★★½

While not perfect, Netscape SmartMarks is a distinct improvement over the bookmark program that comes with the beat of Netscape's 2.0 version browser. You see, before downloading SmartMarks, sites I had bookmarked and organized would randomly disappear when I would close the browser. Now, with SmartMarks, the bookmarks stay, so the program already has endeared itself.

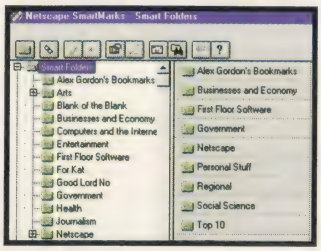
One of the first things you'll notice after getting SmartMarks is that it comes preloaded with 300 Web sites. You'll either react to this as a gross invasion of your privacy or be pleased that they already did some of the work for you.

SmartMarks has many pluses. Best of all, it operates. It's easy to use. It will monitor selected sites and inform you when they change. You can easily drag icons for sites to different folders making it easy to organize. You can even do Internet-wide searches using a variety of engines directly from SmartMarks. And you can save those searches as a bookmark. Oh, and it's free to download.

Even with all these positives, SmartMarks is not the perfect program.The program is pretty slow and occasionally opens up new Netscape windows for every bookmark you select. Still, when it comes down to it, SmartMarks gets high marks because, quite simply, it works.

For downloading instructions visit http://home.netscape.com/comprod/mirror/win32/

—Gustav Knutson



Concentric's lure is pretty impressive: two months of unlimited access for $1. After that, choose from a variety of monthly pricing plans that include $20 for 20 hours and $30 for unlimited use. Plus, you can put up a Web page for free.

Their free software includes two popular pieces of freeware: Netscape Navigator Personal Edition and Eudora Light. That's it on the software front; frankly, we were surprised there wasn't anything else (perhaps a newsreader?), but we couldn't argue with their choices, since we use both. They offer a good start to direct Internet access through a pretty long list of local dial-up numbers. The company, based in Bay City., Mich., also has an 800-number service for $5 an hour.

CONCENTRIC NETWORK

BY CBC

$1FOR TWO MONTHS (START-UP)

★★★★

It's important to remember that Concentric isn't an online service. There are no chat rooms, no archives and none of the bells and whistles that online users might be used to getting. Instead, you get everything on the Internet and the Web, provided that you know where to look. Among their few unique offerings are connections to the Kesmai-Aries gaming system at an additional $1.50 per hour.

To us, it doesn't seem like a bad deal, although it's slightly more than our local service provider, MCSNet, which charges $65 for three months of virtually unlimited access. That's a bit less than the roughly $90 concentric charges for the same time period. Signing up for a SLIP account can be a frustrating experience, however—all that configuration can get confusing. We're glad to report that Concentric's self-loading software lets you bypass all that.

For Web surfers who find online service time eating up their credit-card accounts, moving to a service like Concentric might be just the ticket. Check out their site at http://www.concentric.net. —KF

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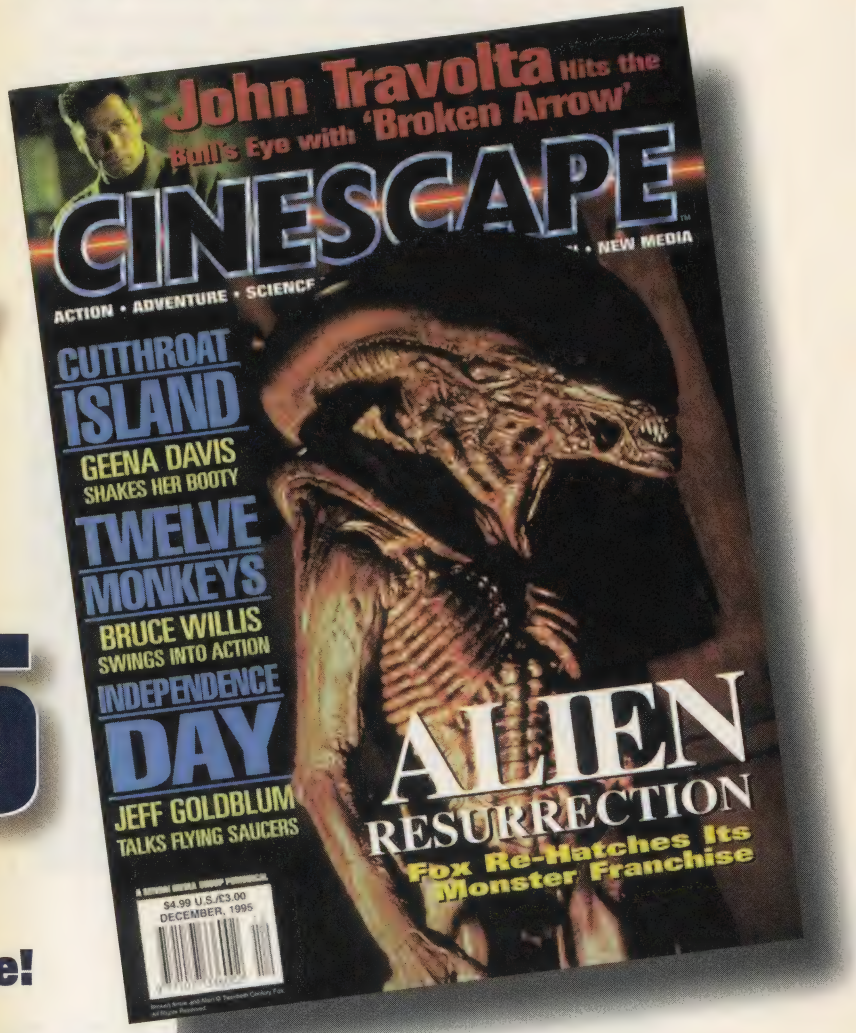

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Netopia is not a another sugary fruit drink with grating ads, but rather it's an Internet router that allows entire networks instant ISDN access through a single device. Netopia is designed to be easy to use for non-techies with a simple plug-and-play interface. Available for both PCs and Macs, Netopia comes in three models: the 630 (for five users), the 640 (unlimited users) and the 440 (Mac/PC networks).

Netopia Internet Router

Farallon

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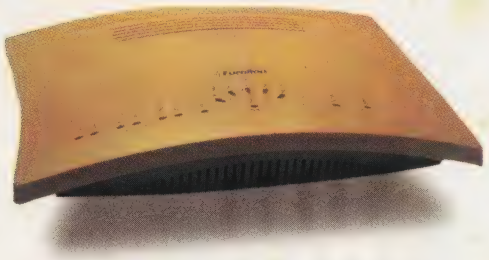

NoHands Mouse

Hunter Digital

$120.00

Let your feet do the browsing with the NoHands mouse from Hunter Digital. One foot controls cursor speed and direction with a "gas pedal" mechanism while the second pedal is used for clicking. The mouse was designed to reduce the strain on your wrists, but think of the benefits of using the NoHands while surfing some of the Web's more sordid sites.

Playing Monopoly by yourself or even against computer opponents is about as fun as watching a pork roast thaw, so the brothers Parker have come up with a solution in the new CD-ROM version of the classic board game. Once you have the CD-ROM, you can hook up with players through the Internet for a truly global game. The French, German and United Kingdom versions of the game are fully compatible, so you can use either pounds, francs or dollars as you purchase Oxford Street or force your opponent to mortgage Parkstrasse. Available for both Mac and PC.

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Each month, we ask a set of questions of the people who make the 'net work, sending those who oversee newsgroups, mailing lists, Inter-relay chat channels and so on a list of e-mail inquiries (hence the name of this page). This month, we profiled the keeper of the FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) for the newsgroup alt.tasteless. Their Web site can be reached at http://nyx10.cs.du.edu:8001/-jnash/alt.tasteless.html

Can you explain alt.tasteless to those who haven't seen it? What's its purpose?
It's a newsgroup devoted to tasteless phenomena in all its forms, a place for people with a twisted and sick sense of humour. You'll find stories about unusual and interesting deaths, nasty visits to the hospital or drunk tanks. In short, stories your parents, teachers, priests, etc. wouldn't have liked. Please note that this is not alt.tacky or alt.bad.taste. This means that merely saying "Bee Gees, ha ha ha" is not enough.

What's your involvement?
My connection to the group is as a contributor, FAQ-maintainer, archive-keeper, historian. And being the inaugural Mr. alt.tasteless.

How did you get involved with it?
I was sitting at the university, hungry as hell, and was suddenly overcome with the urge to write a fun story. Mr. Brown from Florida wrote to me saying that he liked it. I did too, so I continued. 1991 was a good year tasteless-wise. A lot of new ground was broken.

Is tastelessness a positive thing? If so, why?
It's a positive thing the same way William S. Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*, Frank Zappa's *Brown Shoes Don't Make It* and Brett Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* are positive things. To some people they're definitely not. Burroughs is dangerously weird, Zappa sings "Be a jerk and go to work," *American Psycho* contains another bunch of feelings and thoughts that are not acceptable. Being tasteless is a feeling. A strong feeling. You know what you like and you're not ashamed.

Do you have a day job? If so, what is it?
I'm the co-editor of Denmark's largest computer magazine.

What's a typical conversation thread like in alt.tasteless?
Someone relays a story of a piercing or dental experience. Others chip in. It could also be about vomiting. These threads serve a purpose, and are sometimes funny. But it's the well-crafted stories that make alt.tasteless unique.

What makes a Web site tasteless enough to be part of your collection?
It has to be daring. It has to have personality. You see so incredibly many home pages without personality. Obscenity laws make that hard. http://www.people.memphis.edu/~udrhooper/pops/pops.html has a good opening page.

What do you think is the most common thing people misunderstand about your group?
That it is a chat group. Alt.tasteless is not alt.peeves or alt.flame.

What's the oddest thing that had tobe addressed in the alt.tasteless FAQ?
Given the frame, it's hard to think of an odd thing that stands out as remarkably odd. The cutest thing is the Tasteless Secret Santa where people send each other gifts like purses made of kangaroo naughty bits or Shitlovers videos.

What's the strangest thing (or couple of things) that you've seen online?
Mr. New Stallion Owner's diaries in alt.sex.bestiality from the early '90s. It is a well-written diary of an unusual life.

Is your group moderated?
No, and you can't kick people off an unmoderated alt-group. But you can burn them so hard that they run away. Noise makers will be tracked down and dealt with. We call it retro-moderation.

Are flames common in your group? What brings them on?
Yes. Normal netters with big egos and nothing interesting to say. Can't stand them.

Describe your computer area.
At work, a networked PC, huge stacks of press releases, color prints, articles and such. Then there's my hobby room at home. It's on the second floor overlooking the garden delights (oh well, we've got a fairly good apple tree). Strangely enough this room looks exactly like the office at work.

What are some of your favorite postings or favorite tasteless sites?
The '91, '92, '93, '94 and '95 archives of alt.tasteless. (They can be retrieved at http://nyx10.cs.du.edu:8001/-jnash/alt.tasteless.html)

What are you wearing?
Dressing gown and slippers. I must be getting old.

What's your favorite thing to munch on when you surf?
Ammonium chloride candies. I've never seen them in the U.S., and they seem to be quite foreign to Americans. You can ask bediger@csn.net what they taste like.

What are you favorite places to hang out on the 'net
›The Web-inferno and Unabomber Manifesto at http://www.stardot.com/-hhui/
›The Scientology page at http://www.cybercom.net/-rnewman/scientology/home.html
›Dan's Gallery of the Grotesque. It has five times more visitors than the Danish National Gallery. http://www.zynet.com/-grotesk/

What would people be surprised to find out about you?
If they meet me at work in a suit, they'd be surprised to find that I've written 500 kb of tasteless stories.

Finally, what do people do online that make you mad?
They bore me. They're not tasteless.

BRAIN DRAIN

(DISPATCHES FROM THE DIGITAL EDGE)

by Mike Riley

"So much poison in power. The principles get left out. So much mind on the matter, the spirit gets forgotten about."

—Neil Pert, percussionist for Rush

Where is this road of Internet nirvana leading the high-tech hacker and casual surfer? After all, technological breakthroughs keep accelerating at a phenomenal pace and the standards keep shaping the new communication in ways unimagined just six months ago.

As both hardware and software continue to evolve, an important thing not to forget is to maintain the ability to communicate. Internet pioneers may find it difficult to focus on this critical aspect as commercialism proliferates on the binary pathways. The unintended side effect? The 'net could turn into a digital wasteland before it even reaches maturity.

We need some commercial intrusion on the 'net to assure its expansion. However, an overdose of that commercialism could suffocate any meaningful reason to use the Internet. The 'net could become just reading sales brochures in real time—one huge online shopping center, devoid of meaning and person-to-person interaction.

So how can human communication be lifted above the sea of billboards? In November, some fascinating new ideas showed up on the convention floors of COMDEX, the largest computer industry trade show, where the future of digital information is often defined. Most developers there agreed that the 'net is becoming the primary inexpensive way to communicate globally. Customers are demanding connectivity, so soon links to the 'net will be a common application in most commercial software packages.

Experts predict that in 10 years, equipment allowing Internet access will be as common and as required as telephones are today. Users can now help determine the expansion of the Internet, thanks to the commercially available TCP/IP-enabled operating systems, such as Apple System 7.5, Microsoft Windows 95 and IBM's OS/2 Warp.

Even now, I could add Web links into the Help files that I author, including them in word-processing or even spreadsheet files, if I wanted to do it. By doing this, I can bypass and filter ads and extract only the data that I want to see with my homespun programming, getting rid of an ad or unwanted text.

By sifting past this content, I can define what I myself, and not the Webmaster or the site's advertisers, want to see. Until Web server software can be designed intelligently enough to deter hackers like me from raking it to bits, advertisers are going to have a hard time getting in front of my online eyes.

Java applets, small programs that can be downloaded from a Web server and run directly from within a browser, are still in the fetal stage. Yet Java applets offer the potential for non-programmers to create a personalized Web browser to capture only the areas in which a user has an interest. These tools exist today; it's possible, with a few days of undisturbed programming effort, to bring them to life. It's just that not everyone has the time, interest and knowledge to do it.

As these applets and extensions mature, they will provide a component approach to operating systems. No matter what the user's platform is, the Internet should accept them all, provided they follow standard protocols. The platforms are created to fit the rest of the 'net structure already being cobbled together. Today, the current hacks and programming acrobatic feats are cool, but they still border on the equivalent of pet tricks on the Internet. Without standards to create a framework, energetic Internet developers will be needlessly reinventing the wheel. Each one hopes to make millions like the young Netscape vice president who succeeded with only a few thousand lines of code. But without a standard, their chances of being embraced by the Internet community the way Mosaic was ushered in, remains pretty slim. Some of the ideas springing forth from these sharp minds are nifty, but if no one uses their innovations, they've done nothing more than waste time and effort.

While a need exists to solidify the standards, it's important to remember what makes the Web so unique, namely the ability to tailor what you want when you want it. Now what's left are the tools to create custom applications so you get that information "how you want it" as well. Until this dichotomy is resolved, the Internet has a long way to go before it matures into the dream the hype is praying it will become.

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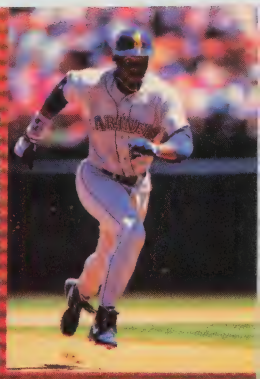

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Knowledge Is Power

(Skewering The Faulty)

FLAME THROWER

WHY IT'S NOT OK TO NOT UNDERSTAND THE 'NET

by justin ware

Right off the bat, let's clarify a few points: The 'net is full of naughty, awful things.

I've seen JPEGs that would make your bile ferment, GIFs that would make any mortal squirm and text so scorching your retinas would sting like a slapped sunburn. Of course, I've also seen pleasant, placid sites so docile that a Care Bear would be bored stiff. Not only that—I've actually seen things in-between.

This should not be shocking. Unfortunately, to most journalists, the starker side of the Web seems like the only one that exists. Theoretically, the media should see the fallacies and rumors and stomp them out, or at least feed the ones with merit.

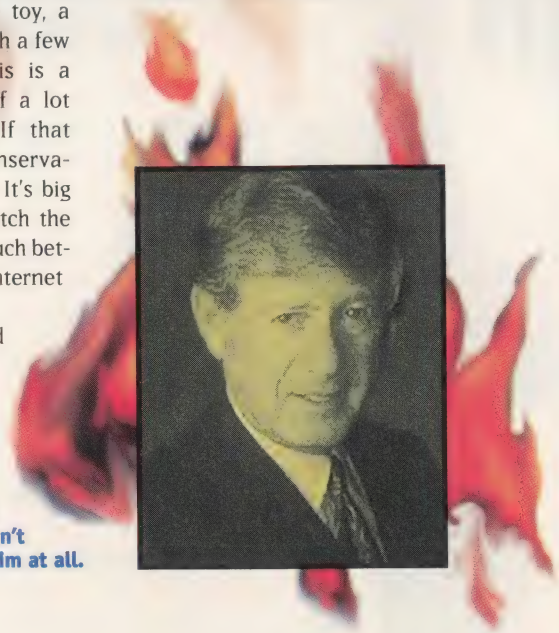
But this isn't happening for one basic reason: The mainstream press doesn't understand the 'net. Amazingly, many members of the media demonstrate their ignorance in a completely self-aware manner. Everyone knows that they don't know, they just think it's OK.

They'd better change their tune fast. The 'net isn't a little toy, a rinky-dink hobby into which a few enthusiasts stumbled. This is a social construct a heck of a lot larger than Woodstock. If that explanation turns off conservatives, then how about this: It's big business. If you want to catch the wave of the future, you're much better off understanding the Internet than warfare.

So why does the old guard in the mainstream media resist learning about the 'net? For the same reason many folks older than age 40 do: It's unnecessary for most daily discourse and it's not something that can be learned passively. Understanding the Web isn't like reading a prospectus before writing about a corporation—you can't just rely on a pile of papers when conducting research. You have to hook up to a computer, a modem and get some software, and even then, it's like stepping over the border at Niagara Falls and trying to "figure out" Canada. It's big and confusing. But would any reporter worth his or her notepad take on Canadian politics without studying the subject first?

Of course not. With the Internet, however, maintaining ignorance has become a perverse point of pride. Journalists routinely decry the twisted nature of the 'net without ever checking it out. Even Ted Koppel confessed in full view of America that his kids understand the Internet better than he does. Now, there's nothing wrong with this—incomprehension in and of itself is fine. Technology progresses, and no one is under any obligation to keep up with it. I'll fully admit that the Internet is not the saving grace of our society, but then again, it was never intended to be. Its whole structure is based on surviving a nuclear attack. How much more defeatist about technology can you get?

But if you're going to stand back and celebrate a self-imposed exile from the forward march of progress, then for God's sake don't write about what you're avoiding. The whole hysteria surrounding cyberporn, bomb-building manuals and pot-



Like many journalists, Ted Koppel's unwillingness to learn about the 'net doesn't seem to bother him at all.

growing techniques would all be severely blunted if the collective press would surf the 'net for a while and discover that most home pages aren't chock-full of decrepit GIFS and sadomasochistic backdrops.

Take a look at a exchange from an episode of *Nightline* as an example. The following dialogue occurred last summer between Koppel and Mike Godwin, legal counsel for the Electronic Frontier Foundation:

GODWIN: And the notion that parents are too dumb to learn computers, I think, is outrageous.
KOPPEL: No, no, no, it's not outrageous. I'm living proof of it.

Well, why would a prominent journalist admit that on national TV? Can you honestly imagine the same exchange taking place on a different topic?

GODWIN: And the notion that adults are too dumb to learn about the federal budget, I think, is outrageous.
KOPPEL: No, no, no, it's not outrageous. I'm living proof of it.

Would any self-respecting American trust Koppel's moderation of the topic after that? We expect the press to have a clue about a subject before they explain it to us. Yet somehow the veneer of technophobia has become acceptable. Journalists from nationally syndicated *Chicago Tribune* columnist Mike Royko to the collective editorial staff of *Time* magazine plop down in front of their Osbornes and Smith-Coronas and churn out tales of Ma and Pa Kettles sucked into twisted chat rooms, as if the Internet were some kind of moral black hole from which no self-respecting American could possibly escape. Check out Royko's Nov. 15, 1995 column "Granny Goes Online Only To Be Waylaid by the Internet" for a quintessential example. In this charming tale, an old lady gets thrown off AOL for giving out her credit-card number and transmitting pornographic pictures by accident. Royko might use this as justification for staying away from the Internet, but does this prove that the online world is evil? No. This proves that stupid people are everywhere. You'd think a good journalist would know that.

Why is this lack of understanding a problem? Because if Ted Koppel had actually ever surfed the Web, Ralph Reed (in the same episode quoted above) wouldn't have been able to get away with painting ridiculous scenarios like "one-quarter of the images [on the 'net] involve the torture of women." Or Koppel could have warned the public of the sheer absurdity of proclamations like this:
"She (a Christian Coalition member) popped it (Internet software) in, she went around the corner to run an errand and when she got back, her child was looking at images of bestiality."

Which Internet did this kid tap into? If this ten-year-old can get on the Web that fast and download shots of bestiality, he's got a hell of a career as a sysop, or, for that matter, a search engine. But why didn't Koppel respond? Because the ignorance of this comment escaped him. After all, he proclaims he'll "never be as computer literate as any one of my children." Well, Ted, your children aren't moderating the issue on national TV—you are. I may not be as good a lawyer as my dad, but I'm not exactly showing up in court to prosecute.

A crusade based on ignorance: Ralph Reed's attempt to save the unsuspecting public from insta-porn is based on dubious facts about the 'net.

This wouldn't matter so much if the Internet was understood by the general public, or, more importantly, politicians. Exercises in idiocy like the Exon Amendment are generated not by well-reasoned discourse but by bandwagon witch hunts, and since politicians have no other source for information, it should come as no surprise that they're responding with vigor to the media's perception. Ignorance fuels media fuels legislation, and we end up with Senator Exon inculpating cyberporn as the worst societal threat since fluoridation.

I only have one suggestion for journalists—cruise around the Web for a bit. Mostly, it's a pretty tepid place. Then, if you want to write about its sociological implications, go ahead. My guess is that you won't have quite as much to say.

The whole HYSTERIA surrounding cyberporn, bomb-building manuals and pot-growing techniques would all be severely BLUNTED if the collective press would surf the 'net for a while.

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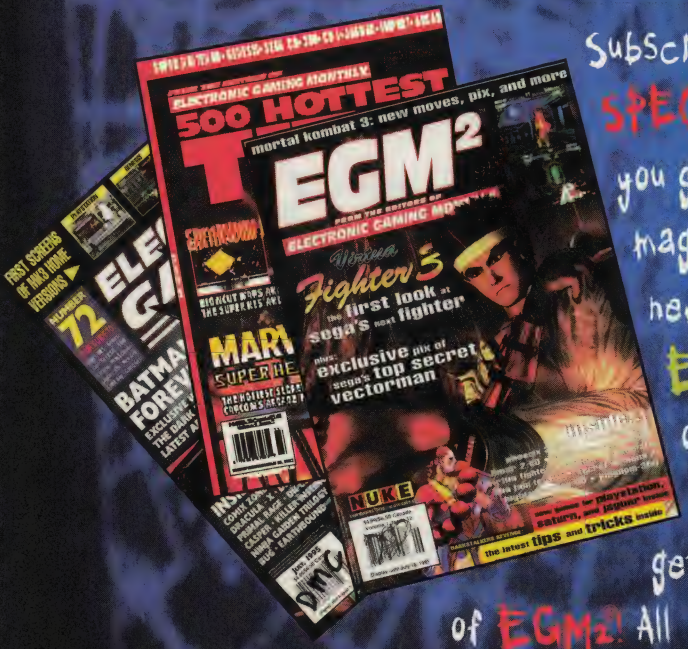

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(BEHIND CLOSED DOORS)

403 Making the Case for Tolerance on the 'net

by Tommy Ranks

CYBERSPACE PROVIDES FORBIDDEN A FORUM FOR BOTH SIDES OF THE DRUG DEBATE

I first looked in on the USENET newsgroup alt.drugs in much the same way one might look in on alt.politics.white-power or alt.sex.pedophilia. Although I'd known articulate people who used marijuana and LSD, I still had a notion that all drug users were degenerate. Then I came across a post by a man who claimed he had recreationally smoked heroin while holding down a computer job and, as he stated with pride, produced some of his best work. I started to wonder how common that kind of thing was. It may be a bit of an embarrassment for those who support the policies of drug prohibition to see "druggies," people ostensibly too addled and too unmotivated to accomplish anything productive, actually gathering facts, producing coherent arguments and making it all available through technology a lot of the drug prohibitionists themselves still haven't figured out. A growing number of today's drug users dial up a modem and get high on information. They talk on Usenet newsgroups such as rec.drugs.cannabis,talk.politics.drugs, and alt.drugs.hard, and on IRC channels such as pot and drugs. They produce what may turn out to be their most lasting contribution: a growing network of drug pages on the World Wide Web.

People who put this drug information on the Web range from utopians (www.island.org) to political activists (www.norml.org/-norml) to ravers and other counterculturalists (www.hyperreal.com/drugs). There are a few basic points on which they all seem to agree: that drug use in society is a far more complex issue than the "just say no" approach that typified U.S. drug policy at its extreme; that incarceration is rarely the best approach to dealing with drug use and abuse; and that an informed person is a person far less likely to suffer the negative effects of drugs.

On www.paranoia.com/drugs (the server that I maintain), as well as on most of the other information servers, information is being put online exactly because we don't want people to become addicted, to overdose or to have bad experiences. Nor do we want people to get arrested or fired. In fact, we and the prohibitionists share a common goal: that of eliminating the damage that drugs cause societies and individuals. Most, if not all, of us have had experience with the results of drug misuse and with the violence and hatred associated with the "War on Drugs." That is exactly why we have become involved: drug prohibition has been tried over 50 years, and it is not working.

Our goal is a world that can accept drugs, minimize the harm associated with them, and approach a society in which a peaceful minority of drug consumers coexist with a majority of drug abstainers. But this peaceful co-existence, which today endures between our drug pages and those of, say, the NCADI (www.health.org), may not last. As early as 1994, U.S. Rep. Gerald Solomon was saying, "Pro-drug use and legalization messages on the information superhighway through the Internet are wrong."

There is a real possibility that the next big controversy about Internet censorship will be over drug information. Concerned parents will talk about their children learning how to beat urine tests; politicians will decry the glorification of drug culture. But just as complexities arose when lawmakers considered legislation to restrict the transmission of sexually explicit information over the 'net, so there would be problems with regulating drug-information flow. In what ways would a Web drug site in England or the Netherlands be subject to U.S. laws?

There's a palpable difference between the Web pages for and those against drug use. Those describing and defending drug use are usually done by individuals, sometimes working in small groups, to spread information about something in which they believe. Those against drug use seem to be done by committee, organizational bulwarks against a problem that is "ominous... and growing," advertising kits to secretly test your kids for drugs, or anti-drug pamphlets for you to sell on your own time. It is good that there are many approaches to combating the negative effects of drugs. My hope is that the future will bring twice as many approaches, available to even more people, and that from these multiple points of view a common, tolerant solution can be found.

GUEST COLUMNIST TOMMY RANKS (FOUCAULT@PARANOIA.COM) SUGGESTS:
HTTP://WWW.CALYX.NET/~SCHAFFER
HTTP://WWW.HYPERREAL.COM/DRUGS/
HTTP://WWW.PARANOIA.COM/DRUGS/
AS GOOD PLACES TO READ ABOUT DRUGS.

Low-resolution thoughts for the New Year

by mirsky

I must say, 1995 was a great year for me. I went from licking stamps and making photocopies at temporary jobs to licking stamps and making photocopies for fun in my leisure time. I spent another year living in my parents' house, patting my cats on their heads and using Kai's Power Tools to fix images of my bald spot. If my growing success with the Texture Explorer is any indication, 1996 will be even better.

Still, there is a lot of room for improvement. I need to become more active—typing faster hasn't affected my cardiovascular system like I'd hoped. I need to open myself to other avenues and experiences. Find myself a girlfriend; maybe two or three. I was thinking of having one for each of my e-mail addresses.

I know I should also read more, maybe write a screenplay, learn to play a musical instrument and learn a foreign language. I could work out, learn to meditate, do yoga or karate. Possibly even try a yoga/karate hybrid, although I'll need to be careful not to kick myself in the face.

Those are all big steps. Right now, I spend most of my time either sitting at my computer or being passed out a few feet away from it. That's why, despite my psychiatrists' urgings, I've decided to leave the above resolutions for 1997.

That doesn't mean I won't make important changes in 1996. Here's a few.

*** I plan to change the name I use on MUDs. Foobies? What kind of name is Foobies?** Initially I used it because it's the password to my ATM card. It helped me remember it. I've been thinking of changing my password, though, and so now Foobies seems expendable.

THE MIRSKY SEARCH ENGINE AT WORK

***I plan to create a more friendly search engine. Right now, all Web crawlers are computer-driven.** This one will be completely organic. I'm going to do all the searching myself, by hand. I'm going to keep everything on index cards. I'm not going to give it a special name or anything, but you might want to call it Mirsky.

*** I plan to develop and propagate a new graphics file format that uses a combination of GIF and JPEG technologies.** It's spelled JPEGIF. It works fine. It's just taking a long time to determine how people should pronounce it.

*** I plan to create a new e-mail signature.** With a little time, I should be able to make a much more accurate depiction of the chemical structure for Prozac.

*** I plan to start exploring new channels on IRC (inter-relay chat).** I recently learned a few Finnish swear words, so now I should have some idea when I'm about to get kicked out of the better ones.

THE DEMAND GROWS FOR NAKED PICTURES OF SCOTT*

*** I plan to read the alt.binaries.nude.celebrities newsgroup more frequently.** I just know there were requests for my George C. Scott pics. Did I miss them again?

*** I plan to stop people from talking dirty in the WebChat Lounge channels.** I think I can have everything under control by copying and pasting in some song lyrics from this location: http://bigdipper.umd.edu/music/lyrics/reek.of.putrefaction.

***I plan to try one of those "Make money fast!" offers constantly posted on Usenet.** I figure if it doesn't work out, I'll just start posting messages that it's a big scam like everybody else.

***I plan to hack into the government site that stores everyone's immunization records.** I can't remember whether I've been vaccinated for cholera. I have a very business-like relationship with my doctor and I'm too uncomfortable to ask. I'm also the number one fan of Holly Hunter. I can't rest until I know she's been properly inoculated.

*** I plan to rename the World Wide Web.** I haven't thought of what I'm going to call it yet, but it's going make it a lot more popular.

MIRSKY'S "WORST OF THE WEB" CAN BE FOUND AT http://mirsky.turnpike.net/wow/Worst.html

No plans to run for president...

*OBVIOUSLY THIS PHOTO IS FAKE...(DUH!)

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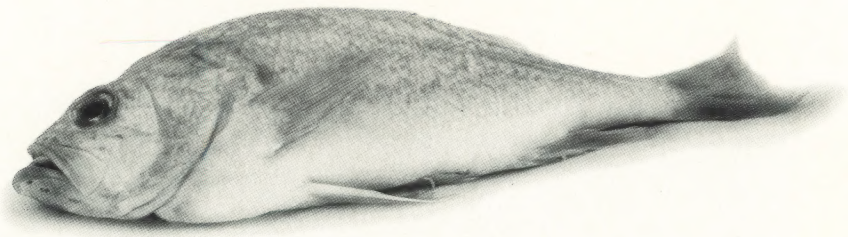

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